





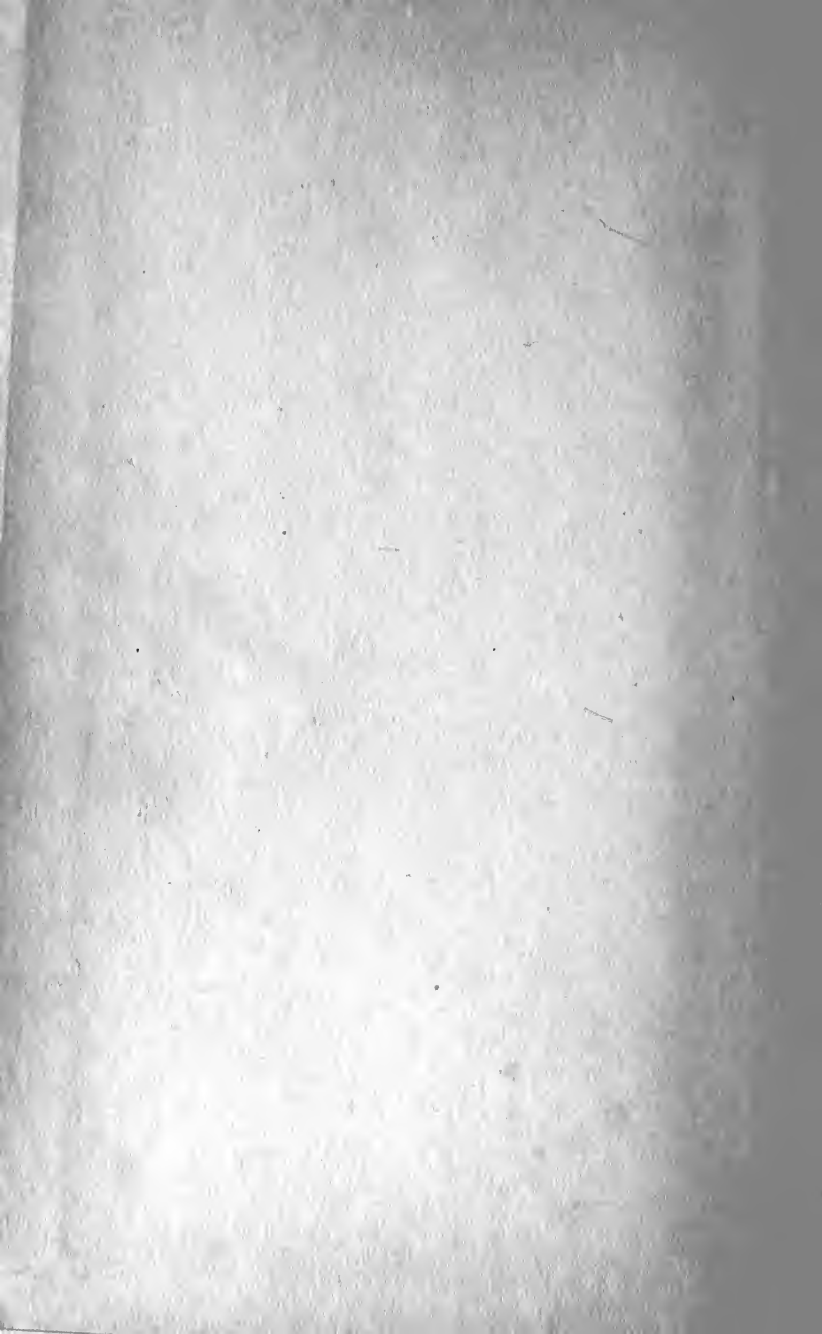
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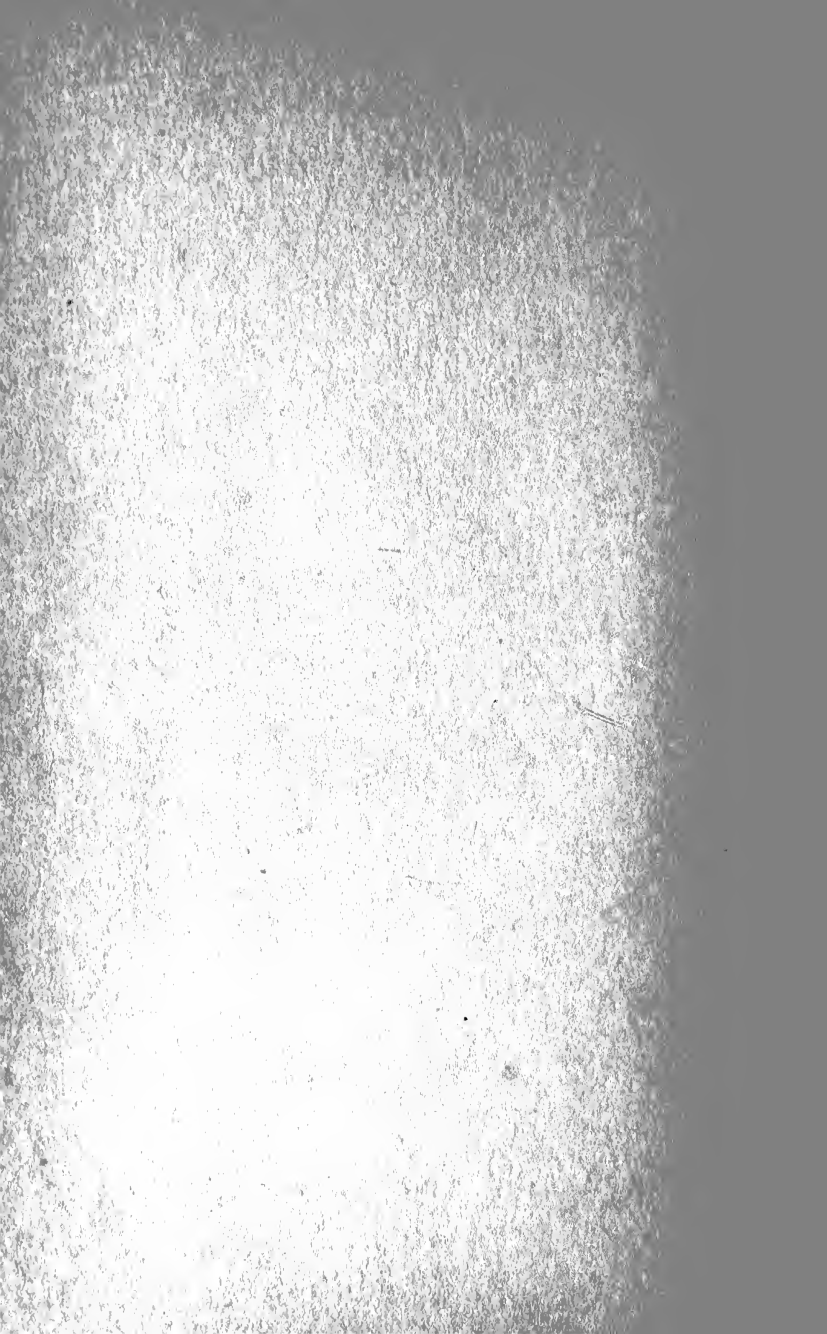
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THE MODERN DRAMA SERIES
EDITED BY EDWIN BJÖRKMAN

PAPA • BY ZOË AKINS

P A P A

AN AMORALITY IN THREE ACTS

BY

ZOË AKINS

"



NEW YORK
MITCHELL KENNERLEY
MCMXIII

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2-26591

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1913



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INTRODUCTION

ZOË AKINS was born in 1886 at Humansville, a small town in the Ozark Mountain region of Missouri, but her home has been at St. Louis since she was eleven. On her mother's side she is a descendant from that Earl of Pembroke who is best known to history as Shakespeare's friend. Her maternal granduncle was Duff Green, a Southern newspaper editor, whose appointment as Public Printer in 1829 was the first manifestation of President Jackson's new theory of office-holding — "to the victors belong the spoils." Numerous members of her mother's family have been engaged in literary pursuits of one kind or another. Her father has for many years been prominent in the affairs of the Republican party and is now Postmaster of St. Louis. She had two years of schooling at the Monticello Seminary, of Godfrey, Ill., and two more at Hosmer Hall in St. Louis. But her hopes of entering either Radcliffe or the University of Chicago were foiled by serious illness.

At seventeen, while her parents were away, she joined for a time the Odeon Stock Company, then playing in St. Louis. The one immediate satisfaction she got out of this step lay in the excitement it created among her friends. But in the end she carried off valuable lessons in stagecraft and a wholesome conviction that she

would never care to become an actress. While still a mere child, she had been writing verse and trying her hands at plays, one of which was performed by her schoolmates at Hosmer Hall. After her experience on the stage, she began to write critical articles for the *St. Louis Mirror* and "specials" for the daily newspapers—mostly as a "means toward adventure." She was anxious to meet visiting celebrities, and her wish was frequently fulfilled. Thus, for instance, she became acquainted with Julia Marlowe, whose friendship and advice have exercised considerable influence on her subsequent progress as a writer. It was Miss Marlowe who made her study the great European dramatists and who taught her "to demand a larger thing of a play than the play itself."

At seventeen she completed her first real stage play, "The End of the Strike." It dealt with a situation almost identical with the one lately existing in West Virginia, and she says of it that "it was no more absurd than the average play produced on Broadway." At nineteen she wrote a verse drama, "Iseult, the Fair," which was "almost produced and almost published." During the same year she wrote also a number of poems which won her increasing recognition. Since then she has produced the following dramatic works which have not yet been printed or performed: "The Voice," 1907, a one-act play, with the action laid in a Turkish harem and the principal character appearing only as a voice; "The Wandering Shepherd," 1907, a masque; "The Sin," 1909, a modern drama in four acts with heredity as its main theme; "The Meddler," 1909, a play about anarchism; "The Learned Lady," 1910, a comedy; "Clemence," 1911, a psychological study in one act.

Her first volume of verse was published in 1912 and met with a great deal of approval on both sides of the Atlantic. Though all the poems in it possess undeniable charm, the volume would, to me, seem pretty much like any other collection of minor poetry but for certain significant passages in such poems as "Mary Magdalen," "One Woman" and "The Sisterhood." In these passages there is displayed an independence of attitude and expression that strongly suggests their author as one of the voices of the new womanhood.

"Papa," the play hereby given to the public, is a little masterpiece that places its creator with such typical representatives of the *genre* as Arthur Schnitzler, the Dane Gustav Wied and the author of "The Dolly Dialogues." Like the work of these men, that of Miss Akins seems on the surface to be "for amusement only," while to the penetrating mind it yields a social satire which, in spite of its good temper and its exquisite playfulness, buries its biting lash beneath the callous cuticle of our modern "dronedom."

EDWIN BJÖRKMAN.



THE FIRST ACT
PAPA'S JEWELS

PERSONS

PAPA

CHLOE

DORIS

MR. RODERICK

DICK

PAPA

THE FIRST ACT

It is mid-morning of a day in June. In an upstairs sun-parlor-balcony of a house in New York, Doris and Chloe, very pretty girls, in charming white morning frocks, are lying on two couches, reading the morning papers and sipping chocolate from the table between them, on which is a large tray laden with breakfast things. A third chair, empty, is also drawn up to the table; it is a big armchair covered with cretonne and, like all the furniture in the balcony, wrought out of ivory wicker. Now and then Chloe and Doris read aloud certain thrilling items to each other; yet their light, sweet voices are unexcited. One might say that there was the note of resignation in them.

CHLOE

The Witchmeres sailed yesterday.

DORIS

Francis Stillwell is with the Countess of Lawton in Scotland — a house party.

CHLOE

Her grace is coming to Newport! . . . Heavens! Can't you just see Mrs. Joe when "my daughter the Duchess" arrives? This is the first time Lydia has been home.

DORIS

She's asked you to England twice, Chloe. Why did n't you take her up?

CHLOE

She did n't really want me.

DORIS

What difference does that make? But, of course, *you* go in for sincerity.

CHLOE

Would n't it be heavenly if we could go somewhere?

DORIS

Then why, under heaven, don't you marry Dick?

CHLOE

You know the reason well. I love Dick too much. . . . But you pretend that you are so heartless. Why don't you marry Mr. Roderick?

DORIS

I don't even like him well enough. . . . Of course I'm not soft like you — and looking for grand passions — and getting unreasonable and touchy when I think I've got one. I'd be content with any nice man if I really *liked* him. But see here, Chloe, you're three years older, and it's up to you to marry first. I will *not* go to live in a house with any human being whom I don't really like. (*Pauses, and then continues*) I'd be utterly miserable if I could n't like my husband as well — as — as — my butler, for instance.

CHLOE

There's nothing against Mr. Roderick.

DORIS

No — no. But he is n't very convincing, and he has n't any magnetism. Is he so *good*? So kind —

really? Or does he only follow the line of least resistance? He looks as weak as a Bronx cocktail — and any sort of weakness gets on my nerves. He'll have to come across with something more noble than supporting Grand Opera and a Home for Fallen Ladies before I'll take him.

CHLOE

Papa likes him so well — poor Papa!

DORIS

It is very unkind of you to reproach me with Papa, Chloe.

[Papa enters — a dainty gallant, fragile and exquisite at the age of sixty-five. He is no less exquisitely dressed. His manners rival in grace and correctness those of a dancing master.]

PAPA

Good morning, daughters.

[Both rise and flutter to him. It is plain that they idolize him, and that he is devoted to them.]

DORIS AND CHLOE (*together*)

Good morning, darling! Good morning, dearest!

[They kiss him and he kisses them. They bring him to the empty chair at the table.]

DORIS

Here is chocolate, dear.

CHLOE

You'd rather have tea, darling, I know.

DORIS

Put the toast in the toaster, Chloe. Is the marmalade there?

CHLOE

Here's your orange juice, first, dear.

DORIS

Chocolate is more nourishing than tea, dear.

CHLOE

But you do want tea, don't you, dear?

PAPA

Yes, darling, tea. . . . I'm too old to change. . . .

I'm too old now for —

[Both stop him with little cries.]

CHLOE

Old! You're fishing, dear! You don't look forty!

DORIS

Not thirty-five! A man is only as old as he feels —
and you feel as young as we do.

CHLOE

See how fresh and well you look this morning, dear.

[She hands him a delicate little mirror which she wears on a chain about her neck.]

PAPA (*examining himself*)

Ah, I'll never get used to these gray hairs, my dears.

DORIS

And we caused them, mostly. You're quite a young man, dear. You must have them touched up again.

CHLOE

I got some rouge for you yesterday, darling. It stays on — and simply can't be told.

PAPA (*the languor goes out of his voice; he is interested*) Liquid or dry?

CHLOE

Liquid; it is called "Pomegranate Glow." It's wonderful.

PAPA

Have Marston bring it to my room before I dress for the afternoon.

CHLOE

Here's the tea, dear — with four lumps and oceans of cream.

DORIS

And the toast and the marmalade — on this nice little plate.

CHLOE

Did you sleep well, dear?

PAPA

Thank you, darling, no. . . . I never sleep any more.

CHLOE AND DORIS (*together*)

Oh, poor papa!

[*The telephone rings. Chloe takes it from the lower part of the table and answers.*]

CHLOE

Hello! This is his residence. He is just awake and having his breakfast. Can I take the message? Wait a minute. (*To Papa*) It's Mr. Deering.

PAPA

Give it to me. I'll talk to him, darling. (*She hands the telephone to him; his manner changes to hauteur*) Yes, Deering. Put them off. To-day? I'll make some arrangements. I'm at breakfast now. Call me in an hour. (*Puts the telephone down; stares blankly ahead in silence*)

CHLOE

What is it? Any worries?

PAPA

Deering is a nuisance. He's — he's not diplomatic. Somebody wants to be paid for something — and I've got to get fifty thousand dollars together at once. He says it *can't* be put off any longer. I

might be indicted — or something. . . . Why, this is humiliating! Humiliating!

DORIS (*with an inspiration*)

Why don't you use —

CHLOE

Our money?

PAPA

I've used Chloe's. I can't touch Doris' until she's twenty-one. It is in trust until then.

DORIS

How disagreeable! How unkind of grandfather to fix mama's money like that. Never mind — you shall have it in a year, darling.

PAPA

I won't live a year if this keeps up. (*Wipes his eyes*) I'm being persecuted. I can't stand unpleasantness.

DORIS AND CHLOE (*impressively to each other, as with one thought*) WE MUST GET MARRIED!

[*Having spoken at the same time both hold up little fingers and formally join them in the rites of wishing.*]

DORIS

Shakespeare.

CHLOE

Milton.

DORIS

Pins.

CHLOE

Needles.

[*The rites have been performed. Their hands fall apart.*]

DORIS

Now!

CHLOE

If my wish comes true —

PAPA (*hopefully*)

Oh, my darling daughters! I'm a great trouble to you!

CHLOE

Nonsense —

DORIS

You're the dearest, wisest —

CHLOE

Best, sweetest —

DORIS

Noblest —

CHLOE

Most wonderful —

DORIS

Man in the whole world.

CHLOE

You really are, Papa! And it is our duty to get married right off. That would help the debts, would n't it?

PAPA

With either Mr. Roderick or Dick as a son-in-law, I could manage very well. With a little tact I could borrow anything from anybody then.

DORIS (*energetically*)

We'll have to draw straws, Chloe, to see which one marries.

PAPA

My noble girls!

[*Chloe suddenly begins to weep.*]

PAPA (*to Chloe*)

Dear, darling, child! I know what is in your mind — but for my sake you must not think of it.

CHLOE

My poor baby!

DORIS

You must have been a ninny — a sentimental ninny — and I think your baby is a good deal better off without you.

PAPA

The child receives the best of attention, and the governess speaks excellent French — I have seen to that. But my lovely Chloe is too good, too saintly, too tender-hearted. She loves her child.

CHLOE

It is n't that. I love Dick — and I must deceive him if I marry him, and *that* means that I shall never get my baby back again. I'm wronging the man I love — and my own child! Oh, why was I ever born? Oh, why did I go with that hateful man to supper — *alone?*

PAPA

There — there — my darling! It was only your lovely innocence that led you astray. It was only an indiscretion.

CHLOE

But I ought not to have gone to his rooms unchaperoned. I knew it was n't exactly — *conventional*.

DORIS

That 's what I say — *why* did you do it?

CHLOE

He was so fascinating!

PAPA

And a very great tenor!

CHLOE

And I thought I loved him!

DORIS

Well, after you saw what was going to happen, why did n't you marry him. It is always done, is n't it?

PAPA

My daughter marry an opera-singer! I should not have allowed it.

CHLOE

Yes — I could n't marry *him*, could I? Besides he had an obscure wife somewhere in Italy.

DORIS

Well, I'm sorry for you. But since it was n't *my* fault, you've got to be a sport and draw straws with me — or we'll toss a coin. Got one, dear?

PAPA (*searching*)

Ah — er — yes! It's only a penny, darling —

DORIS

Don't apologize. It'll do quite well.

CHLOE (*with her head resting on her hands, staring into space*) My little Dolores will be four years old next Thursday!

DORIS

Come — come — don't moon. Heads, me; tails, you. (*To Papa*) Flip it, dear. Once.

PAPA (*enjoying this part of it and rising for the ceremony*) I hope that my darling daughters know how to either win or lose with perfect grace. Ready? [*He flips the coin. All watch it. Doris draws a long breath of relief. Chloe and Papa fall into each other's arms.*]

PAPA

My saintly Chloe!

DORIS

I'm sorry, Chloe — but come, buck up! We'll put it over, some way or other.

CHLOE

He must never know! Dick is so spoiled, and so conventional about all the little things. He'd never forgive me. He — he hates music anyway!

PAPA

He won't know, my darling. Nobody knows. They think — down there — that it is your little half-sister. (*Papa blushes as he speaks*)

CHLOE

That's just like you! To sacrifice your reputation for me! . . . I can do no less than sacrifice everything for you.

[*A bell is heard.*]

DORIS

Mr. Roderick! I forgot! He said he'd be here at eleven. You're a sight, Chloe! Run on up and weep it all out now before you see Dick. You'd better send him around a note.

CHLOE

No, I'll telephone.

DORIS

Say Papa objects, and you must *elope*. Papa needs the money to-day — remember.

CHLOE (*desperately*)

What do I care *what else* I say to him?

DORIS

Go on; don't feel such a martyr. You'll have all

that money — and some more babies if you really want them — and then you can start things and put it over Mrs. Joe and all the rest of them. It won't be bad.

CHLOE

I am going to do what is best for Papa's sake *alone*.

PAPA

My love! Be brave!

[They embrace. Chloe goes out tearfully. Papa and Doris stand touched and genuinely moved — looking at each other for a long second in silence. Chloe suddenly reappears, a more cheerful note in her voice.]

CHLOE

Doris, would you wear that new green frock and the gray motor coat? Or that white serge with my little blue hat — and a dark blue coat? It would be rather smart for an elopement, don't you think?

[The family spirits rise.]

DORIS

Oh, the white and blue! You can stand those simple, severe things.

CHLOE

Dick likes it, too.

PAPA

My daughter must have a bouquet! Just a casual little bouquet of pure white lilies. I'll go for them myself! Ah, if we could only have a real wedding! I love weddings!

CHLOE

Thanks, darling, but Dick will be here the minute

after I call him, so we must hurry. (*She runs out, quite pleased with herself*)

DORIS (*embracing Papa joyously*)

Oh Papa! Papa darling! I don't have to marry old Mr. Roderick, do I? Oh, I'm so happy, dear! I don't want to marry anyone yet!

[*Mr. Roderick appears in the doorway. He wears a golden Van Dyke beard and an air of great patience. He is dressed with wonderful precision and is accompanied by a spic-and-span white English Bull. Mr. Roderick is quite as fine a gentleman in his way as the English Bull in his. There is, in fact, a delicate resemblance between them.*]

MR. RODERICK

May I come in?

DORIS

Oh, good morning, Mr. Roderick. (*She pays great attention to the dog while Papa and Mr. Roderick address one another*) Shake hands, Tommy.

[*The dog gives her a paw.*]

PAPA

Good morning, good morning. Come right in.

MR. RODERICK

Your man put me in the library and went to find Miss Doris. But I thought I heard voices and came to hunt her myself.

PAPA

Quite right. The girls and I have our breakfast out here these hot mornings. But if you'll excuse me, I must leave you for a few minutes — I've an errand at the florist's. I want flowers sent to the funeral of a poor, dear, old lady I used to know, and I wish to select them myself.

MR. RODERICK

Quite thoughtful of you. My car is at the door.
Let my man take you.

PAPA

Thank you. I will. (*He notices the dog and pats him on the head*) Ah, Tommy! He's a very handsome animal, Mr. Roderick.

MR. RODERICK (*beaming with pleasure*)

Say "Thank you," Tommy. Shake hands.

[*The dog is put through his paces and gives his paw to Papa, who then turns to Mr. Roderick.*]

PAPA

We'd like to keep you for luncheon, Mr. Roderick.
We might have some bridge.

MR. RODERICK

Thank you. Perhaps.

PAPA (*kisses Doris' hand*)

Au revoir, my darling.

DORIS

Au revoir, dear.

[*Papa leaves the room with rare grace.*]

MR. RODERICK

What wonderful charm your father has! It is a pleasure to see him with his daughters.

DORIS

He is the noblest man in the world!

MR. RODERICK

And you are a noble daughter. . . . Come, are you going to keep me waiting. . . . You were to tell me something to-day.

DORIS

Just — what?

MR. RODERICK

Have you — forgotten?

DORIS

Oh —

MR. RODERICK

Do you — will you — can't you?

DORIS

Dear Mr. Roderick, I wish I could. But I don't know you well enough. You don't know me well enough. I'm afraid I must tell you — *no*.

MR. RODERICK

Give me some hope. In time, perhaps . . . and I know your dear transparent nature perfectly — perfectly.

DORIS

Not now — or any time. I'm afraid I must n't let you get a false impression. No, it can never be.

MR. RODERICK

Why not? Give me a reason.

DORIS (*with a gleam of amusement in her eyes as she turns slightly from him*) I am too kind to give you the real reason.

MR. RODERICK (*interested*)

I will take it without flinching — and be grateful!

DORIS (*toying with the situation*)

No matter how I might hurt you — or disappoint you?

MR. RODERICK

No matter. Give me a single reason for your refusal, and if it is valid — or if it explains my failure — I shall persist no further in forcing my love upon you. But I shall remain until the end — at your service — ready at all times to make any sacrifice for your

pleasure or comfort, to be a loyal friend to you and your dear ones, to feel a request from you an incomparable honor!

DORIS (*her eyes growing big with pleasure*)

How simply beautiful of you!

MR. RODERICK

Then do not hesitate. Tell me *your real reason*.

[*Doris looks away lost and confused, as if searching for a reason worthy of his attitude. Suddenly an inspiration comes into her eyes. She is overjoyed and begins to act her part with zest.*]

DORIS

You may loathe and despise me, but at least I shall do as you ask. What I am about to tell you will put your promise to a severe test.

[*Mr. Roderick plays up to her. He rises, facing her, and they do their scene in a fine heroic style.*]

MR. RODERICK

Go on.

DORIS

I am not exactly what I seem to you — a young girl — innocent and lovely — (*She falters*)

MR. RODERICK

Go on.

DORIS

I have had my irresponsible and mad moments — moments that break and destroy — though they are so brief — and so careless — (*She falters again*)

MR. RODERICK

Go on.

DORIS

I — I — have had no mother — since I was — a very little child.

MR. RODERICK (*gently*)

I know — go on.

DORIS

I was innocent and foolish —

MR. RODERICK

Go on.

DORIS

In fact it was my very innocence that led me astray.

MR. RODERICK

Go on —

DORIS

But you must not judge too gently. I knew that to go to his rooms, *alone*, to supper — was not exactly — *conventional*.

MR. RODERICK

Go on —

DORIS

But I went —

MR. RODERICK

Go on —

DORIS

I can't — I — I — I thought I loved him — (*She falters*)

MR. RODERICK (*worried and hesitant*)

Well, why did n't you — if he got you compromised — or talked about — why — why did n't he marry you?

DORIS

He — he had an obscure wife in Spain — no, in Italy.

MR. RODERICK

Am I to understand? Great God! Who was this man?

DORIS

A very great tenor. All the girls were wild about him. Besides, Papa would not have permitted me to marry an opera singer. We have been so carefully brought up.

MR. RODERICK

But — Great God! And he — he? Go on.

DORIS (*dropping her face into her hands, and staring into space*) My little Dolores will be four years old next Thursday.

MR. RODERICK (*tramps up and down*)

So? *Can this thing be?* A child! Dolores! Four! How old are you? (*He stops facing her*)

DORIS

Twenty.

MR. RODERICK (*heroically*)

Great God! This is infamous! Your father — knew?

DORIS

Oh yes! He was so splendid! They think it his — the people who have it. He means to keep me with him, always — I've suffered so much. But I could n't deceive *you* — I shall never marry.

MR. RODERICK

But my dear, darling, wounded girl! I've only pity for you! Can't you understand that? I love you as much — no, more than ever! Come, rest your head on my shoulder. Of course I'll marry you! Noble Doris!

[*Doris comes to the earth at this — gasps for breath — falls head over heels in love on the instant — and into his arms with a queer uncertain little sound.*]

DORIS

Oh — Um!

[She cannot manage to say a word. He embraces her and talks as if to a child, with indignant tenderness. She is entirely subdued.]

MR. RODERICK

And you *shall* have your little Dolores back. Of course, you want her. We shall adopt her legally. It can be done quite simply.

[Doris fidgets.]

MR. RODERICK

You shall never be annoyed or mistreated or humiliated or hurt again. You shall have beautiful houses to live in — wherever you want them — and beautiful jewels — and gowns — and your dear father shall come to live with us — and your sister too — my darling angel! . . . Could n't you marry me to-day, right now?

[Dick appears at the door. He is handsome, young, healthy — in motor things of superlative fastidiousness.]

DICK

Hello! Where's Chloe?

[Mr. Roderick and Doris fall apart.]

MR. RODERICK

Ah, come right in, Dick —

[There is a secret in the air. Dick senses it.]

DICK

I say, what's going on?

MR. RODERICK

We'll take you into our confidence. Doris has promised to marry me, and we're going — going —

across the river. It is hard on her dear father — but he'd never let me have her if I did n't steal her — and all's fair in love, you know. We'll make it up to him afterwards.

DICK

I say — this is bully! This is fine!

DORIS

What? Why?

DICK

Why, Chloe has said "yes," at last. . . . We're eloping!

[Dick and Mr. Roderick seize each other's hands and shake in congratulation and joy.]

MR. RODERICK

Fine! It's a foursome. . . . But — (*Vaguely*)
Are n't there licenses — and rings — and things?
Doris' father has my machine.

DICK

I've a touring car at the door. I'm onto all the ropes. It will take Doris fifteen minutes to put on a hat, I suppose, so we might run down the avenue for a couple of rings.

MR. RODERICK (*embracing Doris*)

We won't be gone a minute, darling. Be ready when we come back, will you?

DORIS (*à propos of nothing*)

Poor Papa!

[All are silent.]

MR. RODERICK

I do feel as if we were treating him rather shabbily.
(*He pauses*)

DICK

I've got it. Write a note saying we're all getting married and leaving for Europe this evening. Ask him to forgive us and come along.

MR. RODERICK

Of course! The very thing!

DORIS (*to Mr. Roderick*)

You want him?

MR. RODERICK

Of course.

DORIS (*she begins to get her bearings again*)

Oh, you're the noblest man in the world—except Papa!

[*Mr. Roderick embraces her.*]

DICK

Now we're running along. Write that note—and have Chloe ready when we get back.

DORIS

Yes, yes, yes.

[*She sits at a little desk at one side of the room; Mr. Roderick kisses her good-bye, and dilly-dallys over her chair.*]

DORIS (*to Mr. Roderick*)

You won't ever be sorry? I may be much worse than you think me.

MR. RODERICK (*in a low, intimate voice*)

Nonsense. Your soul is perfectly clear to me. I love you all the more for having suffered. I understand perfectly.

[*Doris fidgets.*]

DICK

Come on, come on!

DORIS (*sending Mr. Roderick away*)

Go —

[*Mr. Roderick and Dick start to leave; Doris writes; all three murmur at the same time.*]

DORIS (*writing*)

Dear darling angel Papa —

DICK

The best place in . . . shortest way —

MR. RODERICK

. . . Extra tires . . . such lovely girls . . . Tommy, Tommy. . . .

[*They go out, followed by the English Bull. Doris writes for a moment. Chloe enters looking very fetching. She carries her dark coat.*]

CHLOE

I saw Dick leave with Mr. Roderick — why?

[*Doris writes on, folds up her note and kisses it violently before she answers.*]

CHLOE (*repeats her question*)

Why, Doris?

DORIS

There! (*Bounces up*) Oh Chloe! I'm in love — really in love — with Mr. Roderick! He *is n't* weak — and he *is* good and he *has* magnetism — and I not only *like* him! I *love* him!

CHLOE

But Dick?

DORIS

They've gone for the rings —

[*Papa enters with two bouquets, one of yellow roses, and one of pink roses.*]

PAPA

Dick has n't come, has he? I'm in time! (*He kisses each daughter and presents the bouquets elegantly*) I could n't bring white flowers — they remind me of funerals. But here are yellow roses for the bride — for I'm jealous already; and pink roses for my Doris — who is rosier than any rose.

DORIS AND CHLOE (*charmed*)

Oh, thank you, Papa, dear!

[*Both kiss him.*]

DORIS

But here's news for you — news! (*Waves the letter she has just written*) You must n't read it yet. It's a secret. Promise not to read it until you ought.

PAPA

I promise — on my honor!

DORIS

Then I shall tell you what is in it. I'm in love with Mr. Roderick. He's really a very fine, noble man, dear — next to you.

CHLOE

For heaven's sake get to the point, Doris!

DORIS

Well, it all came about so beautifully that I've promised to marry him. He's gone for a ring, and we're eloping! I could n't say a word. . . . You've no idea how real love puts you in your place.

CHLOE

You! But *I'm* eloping. Dick said he'd be right over.

DORIS

We're *all* eloping. Mr. Roderick told Dick, and

they shook hands and went for two rings while I was writing this note to you, Papa, and getting a hat on. They think they 're treating you badly, the silly dears. And this is to ask you to forgive us all and to sail with us for Europe to-night. Does that fix your debts, dear?

PAPA

Perfectly! My darlings! My treasures! You have saved my life and my honor!

DORIS

And oh, Papa; you must be *very* angry, and pretend to be quite put out!

PAPA

I could n't embarrass my daughters! I shall not relent until Chloe has wept. I hope we go to Paris first! Let us linger in Paris, my treasures. I love Paris. The shops! The ladies!

DORIS

Don't be naughty, Papa.

CHLOE (*who has been thinking*)

Then there's no longer any driving need of my marrying Dick.

DORIS

Now don't get that into your head! You know perfectly well, Chloe, that you lost when we flipped a coin. My marriage is only a happy incident.

CHLOE

But I'd be happier if Dick knew. I'd be happier even if I lost him, and he *might* forgive me — and let me have my little Dolores back some time.

DORIS

For heaven's sake! Don't do that, Chloe! You must n't! You really must n't!

CHLOE

Why not? I can afford to risk it, now that Papa will be saved anyway. You don't know what it is to deceive the man you love. *You* have nothing to hide.

DORIS

Oh! Oh! But I do. *I'm* deceiving Mr. Roderick *too* — but I'm putting it over.

PAPA

Men are only too happy to be deceived by lovely ladies. It is an honor and a privilege.

DORIS

But I'm deceiving him — awfully. . . . He asked for a reason . . . I was too nice to say that I didn't seem able to enthuse about him . . . I wanted a *good* reason . . . so I said it was Dolores . . . and he forgave me so nobly that I loved him at once!

CHLOE

How perfectly unscrupulous of you! That is sheer plagiarism, Doris! You've plagiarized my romance . . . and my child!

DORIS

But I don't care about your romance! Thank heavens, I don't have to have that crazy Italian tenor on my conscience, and it's humiliating enough to have Mr. Roderick ever think I was such a fool. But he'd never forgive me now, if he found out that I was n't, and had n't suffered, and all that — and you're distinctly selfish to make a fuss about it.

CHLOE

But my little Dolores!

DORIS

I don't want your little Dolores. . . . I just put her in accidentally, and now Mr. Roderick insists upon

adopting her — so you 've got to be a sport and lend her to me.

PAPA (*to Chloe, who bursts into tears*)

Dolores will be all in the family, dearest. Now don't cry! You 're too tender-hearted. But you can have her visit you every day. Indeed, Fate has arranged things very wisely, my darling. I daresay that you 'll see more of your child than most of our friends see of theirs. ✓

DORIS

And anyway, Dick absolutely would not stand for her — or for you, either — if you told. Then Mr. Roderick will be simply an ideal father — much better than Dick.

PAPA

Doris is right. For my sake let us all be happy. The whole matter seems to be most satisfactorily arranged.

CHLOE

For *your* sake, darling papa.

PAPA

Now I shall be able to really enjoy my grandchild. After all, Dolores is my grandchild, either way.

[*All smile brightly.*]

CHLOE AND DORIS (*as if realizing this for the first time*)

Why, of course! That 's true!

DORIS

Though it seems quite wicked to think of *you* as a grandfather, dear.

PAPA (*he closes the argument and turns to a safer subject of conversation*) Thank you, darling. And they 'll be here soon, did you say, dear?

DORIS

Yes, any time. I must get ready this instant. Oh, Papa, he is so noble, and I'm deceiving him so basely — I'm not worthy!

[She falls into Papa's arms. Chloe does the same.]

CHLOE

Nor I! I'm deceiving *him*.

[Papa holds them both tenderly, a head on each of his shoulders. Both weep — Doris almost angrily, as if she did n't know how; Chloe more copiously and gracefully. Papa's voice is quite weepy too.]

PAPA

There — there — don't cry! A sense of honor often makes life very difficult, my angel.

[A bell rings.]

DORIS (*pulling herself together and rising energetically to the occasion*) There they are! Give me the letter. Marston will be told to give it to you. . . . Oh . . . he is wonderful, Papa, and I — I never thought I could feel — like this! It is very confusing. There's a terrible pain right here; yet I'm glad.

[There is a new sincerity and softness in her voice as she lays her hand on her heart. Chloe and Papa look at her in silence. She goes out loftily. Papa and Chloe are impressed as if by something they cannot fathom. There is a silent pause. Doris appears again in the doorway in a much more usual frame of mind.]

DORIS

What would you wear, Chloe? Don't you think my white wool coat and my big white hat will be rather good? I won't have time to change anyway. I'll

wear a blue veil, and Papa's dear pink roses. Quite French, don't you think?

CHLOE

Yes, *you* can do those fluffy things.

DORIS (*waving her hand*)

I'll be down in a second.

[*She goes out. Papa and Chloe are sensible of a more comfortable atmosphere. Papa speaks cheerfully.*]

PAPA

Could you get me Mr. Ingraham on the telephone, dear? I must arrange for my loan at once.

CHLOE

Certainly, dear. It's Broad 883, is n't it?

[*She sits down at the table and lifts up the telephone receiver. Dick appears in the doorway.*]

DICK

May I come in? Hello, Chloe! (*To Papa*) Good morning, how are you?

PAPA

Good morning, Dick; good morning. (*To Chloe*) Don't bother about my number, dearest, I'll call from the library. May we keep you for luncheon, Dick?

DICK

We're just off for a ride — if Chloe has n't changed her mind.

PAPA

Perhaps we may expect you back? Luncheon is at two. You're very welcome.

DICK

Perhaps. . . .

PAPA

You 'll pardon me just a minute? (*He goes out*)

DICK

Your father 's a charming fellow, Chloe.

CHLOE

He 's the noblest man in the world — and you 're —

DICK

I 'm what?

CHLOE

Next.

DICK (*half reproachfully*)

So you 've decided that at last?

CHLOE

I 've thought it a long time.

DICK (*takes her in his arms*)

And my Chloe is the most beautiful, the tenderest, sweetest, most spiritual, most sincere woman in the world!

[*He kisses her. Mr. Roderick enters, beaming.*]

MR. RODERICK

Hello! Where 's Doris?

CHLOE

She 'll be here in a minute, Mr. Roderick. (*Gives him her hand*)

MR. RODERICK

So we 're all ready for our eventful ride? We must wish each other much happiness. (*He takes Chloe's hand and holds it warmly*)

CHLOE

Oh — oh, we do, don't we?

PAPA (*enters*)

I 'm trying to engage Dick to come back with Chloe for luncheon, Mr. Roderick. You are stopping?

MR. RODERICK (*lying with difficulty*)

The truth is — we — your other daughter and I are going with them.

PAPA

Don't let me disarrange your plans. I shall drop in at the club. I'm never able to enjoy my luncheon if I'm alone.

DICK

Why don't you join us — at — at — at Sherry's, say — at — at *two* is all right, is n't it?

MR. RODERICK AND CHLOE (*simultaneously*)

Oh yes, do! Do, Papa!

PAPA

I am delighted.

[*Doris enters, looking charming and picturesque in white, with the blue veil and pink flowers.*]

DORIS

I see I'm keeping everyone waiting. Ready?

PAPA (*in his most charming manner*)

I hope that the ride will be pleasant — that the sun will not be too hot — nor the roads too dusty — and that your motor will be in its most amiable mood.

[*All, rather like children, get ready to go, and speak at once.*]

MR. RODERICK AND DICK

Thank you! Thanks!

DORIS AND CHLOE

Good-bye, dear! Good-bye, darling!

MR. RODERICK

Sherry's at two!

DICK

Don't fail us!

[*Papa holds Chloe's coat and kisses first Chloe, then*

Doris, very delicately; then he takes a hand of each in each of his hands.

PAPA (to Mr. Roderick and Dick)

Sherry's at two. (*He kisses his daughters' hands in turn, bowing over them*) Au 'voir, my dears!

[*All go out. Each of the four a little shyly, as if occupied with some weight of guilt — not, however, a wholly uncomfortable weight. Papa alone is bland and blithe and unselfconscious, as if unaware that things of importance are happening. He stands smiling near a window, waving his hand as he sees them leave. Then he goes to the telephone, suddenly becoming tense and nervous. Once his conversation begins, though, he gets involved in the emotions he pretends.*

PAPA

Broad 883. — Hello; Mr. Ingraham. . . . Yes, yes, I called a minute ago. . . . Ingraham? Yes, I just called again about that loan. Let it go, Ingraham. I won't have time to call in my securities and take the matter up to-day. . . . It is very inconvenient, but I'll have to cable later. . . . Yes, I'm leaving to-night; yes, quite suddenly—in a great rush. . . . Well, yes; it is something rather serious. . . . My daughters—I've loved them and tried to be a good father, Ingraham. . . . Thank you . . . they—they've both *eloped*. . . . *Eloped*, without a word to me, both of them. . . . And you know my dislike of sensationalism. . . . Yes, Dick. . . . Oh yes, a good marriage, as far as money goes . . . and my little Doris, . . . yes, Mr. Roderick. . . . Well, I suppose so, but I wanted my daughters to stay with *me* awhile. . . . Yes, I'm sailing with them

this evening. . . . That is why I have to let my own business go. . . . They left a note. . . . Of course, I shall forgive them, and then sail with them as they ask. I'm a forgiving man, but I'm hurt, Ingraham; *hurt*. . . . Well, if you want to transfer that sum to my account without the securities. . . . Of course it is only a formality, and I can send you down my note. . . . Thank you, Ingraham. . . . Yes, the Phillips Trust handle my account — or my man Deering will call. . . . Make out the check to him, John E. That will be quite simple. No, that's all for the present, but I may cable some orders. . . . Thank you very much. You've obliged me considerably. . . . I suppose most fathers *would* feel that way, but I'm deeply hurt. . . . Thank you. . . . I hope *you* continue well, and you must present my compliments to Mrs. Ingraham. . . . Good-bye, good-bye. (*He puts the telephone down. His mood instantly relaxes, and he is pleased with himself and the world. On the table is a box of cigarettes. He takes one and lights it delicately, saying to himself*) Chloe's? (*He takes a few puffs; and makes a discovery*) Ah no; Doris'. . . . (*He starts to pick up the newspaper. A handkerchief falls to the floor. He lifts it and regards it tenderly*) Doris'? (*He holds it up to catch the perfume, smelling it daintily*) No, Chloe's. (*He lifts it to his lips and kisses it. His face beams with love*) My jewels! (*He slips the handkerchief into his cuff as . . . the curtain falls*)

CURTAIN



THE SECOND ACT

MR. RODERICK'S MAGNANIMITY

PERSONS

DORIS

CHLOE

PAPA

MR. RODERICK

DICK

ZIMZAPANZI

LITTLE DOLORES

THE BUTLER

THE GOVERNESS

THE SECOND ACT

A little more than a year has elapsed. It is almost time for tea when the rise of the curtain discloses the sitting-room of Mr. Roderick's villa near Trouville. The room is charming, and the furnishings are according to the best French taste. French windows at the back, slightly ajar, open onto a terrace overlooking the bay. Curtained doorways are on opposite sides of the room. Doris and Chloe are writing, their chairs are across from each other at the same table, and their pens drink from the same well. Chloe writes in her diary. Doris finishes a letter and addresses it.

DORIS

There!

CHLOE (*looking up*)

How much enterprise it takes to get a letter off!

DORIS

You 're a lazy thing, Chloe.

CHLOE (*sweetly*)

Yes, I know I am. I have n't your energy.

DORIS

And I would n't have yours when it comes to writing oneself down in a diary — the way you do. (*She goes behind Chloe's chair and reads*) "I am utterly happy, and my soul is as peaceful as yonder sea. A year of constant companionship has only made our love more perfect. As I write, the dawn throws

its golden glory o'er hills and bay, and there is dawn in my heart!" Fine! Go on with it! If you can touch up the dawn like that at this time of day, you'll be turning into a lady-author yet.

CHLOE (*sarcastically*)

How polite of you! To look over my shoulder and read my secret thoughts!

DORIS

It's very *bourgeois* to be so well-bred, Chloe. Anyway, your secret thoughts are so nice and romantic. I'll wager that if you talked in your sleep you'd be as discreet as if you were talking to a reporter.

CHLOE (*suddenly intense*)

Don't mention talking in one's sleep, Doris! Heavens, if you could only know what horrors I've had of that! For a long time I drank black coffee to keep me awake. But now, even if I said anything about Dolores, Dick would just think that I had eaten something that did n't agree with me. Is n't it funny, Doris, but Dick is convinced that she belongs to Mr. Roderick.

DORIS

Roddy? How? Who? Just what do you mean?

CHLOE

Don't get peevish about it, but Dick cannot see why Mr. Roderick, when he had not been married quite a year, should send to America for a perfectly strange child to adopt. Of course, it does look queer.

DORIS (*angry and haughty*)

How ungrateful you are, Chloe! You might talk him out of that, at least. You're lucky enough not to have him find out about you and that tenor — and because Roddy is so noble and thinks that she's

my child, and brings her here where you can be with her every moment, *he* gets suspected! Will you please tell me *who* is supposed to be her mother?

CHLOE (*equally angry and haughty*)

I'm sure it is n't my fault, Doris. I did n't tell Mr. Roderick she was your child. You did it yourself — and I can't help it, can I, if Dick thinks that her mother must have been one of Mr. Roderick's protégées? He was always finding them on the East Side and doing things for them — and Dolores is dark.

DORIS

You might, at least, have picked out an American tenor, or an English — or even a German — to lose your head about! I will not have people thinking that my husband had an affair with some — some ignorant immigrant!

CHLOE

I'm sure that I can't go back and do it all over again now. . . . Anyway, the greatest tenors are *always* Italians.

[*Papa enters, younger and more blithe than ever. His amiable and charming presence ends the family quarrel. Both daughters rise and greet him with a kiss, and all three move to a sofa, where they sit, affectionately grouped. Papa is dressed entirely in white. He looks beautiful and benign.*]

PAPA

Ah, daughters!

DORIS AND CHLOE (*speaking together*)

Oh, Papa, dear! . . . Oh, Papa, darling!

DORIS

Did you have a good time, dear?

CHLOE

You are n't tired, are you, dear?

DORIS

Did you win or lose, dear?

CHLOE

How much, dear?

PAPA

The goddess of luck smiled on me, my angels: it is almost three thousand. (*He shows them the money*)

DORIS

You 're a perfect wonder, darling! I'm proud of you.

CHLOE

You are certainly a shark, Papa. Who else was at the Casino?

PAPA (*suddenly puts the money away and stares into space with a look of profound sadness*) That bounder, Witchmere.

DORIS AND CHLOE

Oh, really! . . . Not really!

DORIS

Did he dare to be rude to you?

CHLOE

What did he do?

PAPA

He avoided me. He only nodded.

DORIS

And you had n't seen each other for months?

CHLOE

I simply can't understand it!

DORIS

Do you owe him anything, dear?

PAPA

No, my darling. I've been particularly careful never to have any business transactions with him. He never has liked me.

DORIS

He's been jealous of you!

CHLOE

Georgia Witchmere is such a fright that she hates everybody. She may have brains, but who cares anything about brains? ✓

PAPA (*repeating*)

Witchmere's a bounder!

DORIS

He pretends to be so fearfully high-brow. He makes himself conspicuous by being at the opera before the curtain goes up, and collects something or other that's utterly uninteresting. But he goes on his knees to Roddy, all right. You ought to have cut him, Papa, yourself—now that I'm married to Roddy.

PAPA

I meant to, really—but he had such charming people with him.

CHLOE AND DORIS (*together*)

Who?

PAPA

The young Earl and the Countess of Hemmingway. The Countess is perfectly exquisite.

CHLOE AND DORIS

Oh!

DORIS

Don't we know someone else who knows them?

CHLOE

Not a soul here — but I've heard a lot about her.

PAPA

They both looked bored to death by Witchmere.

DORIS

They are really our kind, you know. She's got all sorts of go. . . . Roddy's got to get them here.

That would fix the Witchmeres, would n't it, darling?

PAPA (*beaming*)

Perfectly, my angel. Think of Witchmere trying to snub me! It is amusing! Of course I shall have to treat him charmingly to show that I did n't notice it.

CHLOE

Did you meet anyone else, dear?

PAPA

Oh, that reminds me! Something quite distressing has occurred.

CHLOE AND DORIS

What, dear Papa?

PAPA

That man is here!

CHLOE AND DORIS

Which man?

PAPA

Zimzapanzi!

CHLOE

My Zimzapanzi, Papa?

DORIS (*speaking at the same time*)

Chloe's Zimzapanzi, Papa?

PAPA

He's at the hotel, and a very great lion, my darlings. But he *is* charming. I was introduced to him yes-

terday. I did n't mention it to you, but I saw him again to-day.

DORIS

Good heavens! Suppose we meet him.

CHLOE

Oh, what shall I do?

PAPA

I thought of that. It quite haunted me last night. So to-day I went over and had a talk with him.

DORIS

What did you tell him?

CHLOE

What did he say?

PAPA

I told him all — about little Dolores, and Chloe's marriage to Dick, and Doris — everything. He was profoundly touched, my dears.

CHLOE

Does he love me still?

DORIS

Do you think we shall run into him?

PAPA

I explained the difficulties. He will be sure to help us avoid any embarrassing situations. He still cherishes the memory of Chloe, and apologized to me most abjectly. It was very wise, I think, to have this understanding with him.

[Leopold enters with the tea things. He arranges the table.]

DORIS

Tell them, Leopold. (*The servant bows and goes out*) You shall have tea, darling, at once. (*She busies herself at the table*) Chloe, too. She's begun

to moon. Now, whatever happens, Chloe, be a sport and don't look as if a ghost were hanging around.

CHLOE (*bracing up a little*)

Don't worry about me, Doris. Is — is he any stouter, Papa?

PAPA

He 's robust — quite robust — but not — not unusually so — for a tenor.

DORIS (*busy making the tea*)

Oh yes, Papa, I wanted to ask you what you think of my attitude toward little Dolores. Is it right?

PAPA

Quite perfect, my darling.

CHLOE

Ah, if you could only know how hard it is for me!

DORIS

Well, I'm the one that has the difficult time — being as soft as Roddy expects. I'm not a bit that way myself, but he is so happy about restoring her to me that I have to keep on acting like a long-lost mother —

CHLOE (*interrupting, as if making a point*)

Mr. Roderick certainly does act like a long-lost father. You'll admit that, at least.

DORIS (*icily*)

That is because he has so much magnanimity.

[*Mr. Roderick and Dick enter. Mr. Roderick is as noticeably spic-and-span as ever, and Dick as ultra-fashionable in his fastidious fashion. There are exclamations in chorus as the five of them spread themselves comfortably about, indolently and gracefully. Mr. Roderick, of course, waits near Doris, in order*

to make himself useful. Tommy, the English Bull, follows and conducts himself with charm and taste.

DORIS

Roddy, dear, here 's Chloe's cup.

[Mr. Roderick does what is required in very perfect fashion.]

DORIS

Rum or cream, to-day, Papa?

PAPA

Cream, dearest, thank you.

DORIS

How about it, Dick?

CHLOE

I long for a sandwich.

DORIS

Roddy, the sandwiches.

[Chloe is quickly satisfied by the alert Mr. Roderick.]

DICK

Rum for me, Doris.

DORIS

Here you are.

[Dick secures his own cup as Papa is peering sideways at two sandwiches to see which he prefers. It is finally decided by his taking two. Dick, on his way to his chair, secures a sandwich for himself; and now Mr. Roderick, after fussing with the lamp for Doris, relaxes sufficiently to take the cup that she has fixed for him.]

PAPA

Here, Tommy: beg!

[Tommy, having begged nicely, is allowed to share Papa's sandwich.]

MR. RODERICK

Will you have anything else, my dear?

DORIS

A sandwich. Where are they?

[Mr. Roderick passes them.]

DORIS

Thanks.

CHLOE

Here, Tommy.

[Tommy goes toward her to beg for more.]

MR. RODERICK

Suppose we have little Dolores down? Shall we?

PAPA

Ah yes, where is our little angel?

DORIS

Ring, Roddy.

[Mr. Roderick rings.]

CHLOE

Papa says the Witchmeres are at the hotel, Dick.

[The butler appears.]

DORIS

Send Mlle. Dolores, Leopold.

[The butler bows and disappears.]

DICK

Are they coming over?

DORIS

Don't anybody ask them here! I don't want them!

PAPA

But why, my dear?

DORIS (*petulantly*)

All of them get on my nerves, frightfully: they always did.

MR. RODERICK (*soothingly*)

Then they can't come. I'll avoid asking them.

[*Little Dolores enters, followed by her governess. The child is dark and thin, with much dignity and very accurate manners. Her clothes are picturesque and fascinating. As she makes her little courtesy and runs to Doris, waiting for the others to stop speaking, she is really quite wonderful. Her ease is astonishing. The governess, a French woman, precise, dignified, and with a startlingly interesting face, waits near the door, following Dolores' conduct with careful eyes. Contempt, indifference, and a superficial respect are all in her attitude.*]

PAPA AND CHLOE (*speaking together*)

Ah! The angel! The darling!

MR. RODERICK AND DORIS (*following closely*)

The dear child! — My little one!

DICK (*lagging a little with his comment*)

Cutie!

DOLORES (*as if unconscious that she has been mentioned*) Bon jour, Maman! (*She lifts her face for a kiss, while her entire audience is breathlessly watching her*)

DORIS (*kissing her with elaborate affection*)

D'ou viens tu, ma chère?

DOLORES

Je viens de manger mon petit souper avec Mademoiselle, Maman. (*Another courtesy, and she is off to Mr. Roderick, bobbing to him*) Bon jour, Papa.

MR. RODERICK

Bon jour, ma petite.

[*He kisses her, and then lifts her high in the air by*

way of being entertaining. Even at this lack of tact Dolores does not lose her self-possession. When she is replaced on the floor, she courtesies again and runs to Chloe.

DOLORES

Bon jour, ma tante.

[Chloe interrupts speech and bows with an emotional embrace that Dolores finds distinctly trying.]

CHLOE

Ah — my darling little Dolores! Do you love me?

DOLORES (*prettily and almost successfully hiding a yawn as she answers in a bored tone of voice*) Oui, oui, tante Chloe. (*She bobs instantly and is off to Papa, who rises to receive her; they enjoy one another, obviously, and Dolores drops her very best courtesy*) Bon jour, Grand-papa.

[Papa kisses her hand, and then both her cheeks.]

PAPA

Bon jour, mon ange.

DOLORES (*seeing Tommy lurking enviously near*)

O, le chien, le chien!

PAPA

Come here, Tommy. (*He drags Tommy by the collar into Dolores' proximity and invites her to pat Tommy on the head; then encouragingly and precisely*) Mets ta petite main sur la tête du bon chien, ma chérie.

[Dolores obeys by resting her little hand delicately on the head of the good dog. Tommy behaves beautifully. Everyone regards them attentively. Doris lights a cigarette.]

DOLORES

Merci, Grandpapa. Bon jour, Tommy.

PAPA (*to the governess*)

May I invite Dolores to share my sandwich, Mademoiselle?

THE GOVERNESS (*in accented English mixed with French*) Pardonnez, mais non, M'sieu. She has had her supper and a bon-bon. Ça suffit.

[*Dolores is unconcerned. She leaves Tommy and Papa reluctantly, to run to Dick.*]

DOLORES (*bobbing perfunctorily*)

Bon jour, oncle Dick.

DICK (*trying to patronize her*)

Hello, kiddie.

[*Dolores turns her face up to be kissed in spite of these barbaric manners, and after Dick has given the kiss she makes still another courtesy and runs to Mademoiselle, who is waiting with one hand outstretched as a hint that they must go. Dolores takes the hand, then releases it to make her farewell courtesy after she has spoken.*]

DOLORES

Bonne nuit, Maman; bonne nuit, Papa; bonne nuit, tante Chloe; bonne nuit, Grand-papa; bonne nuit, oncle Dick.

ALL (*in chorus*)

Bonne nuit, ma chérie! . . . Ma petite! . . . etc.

[*Dolores is about to go. Suddenly she remembers something and clasps her hands.*]

DOLORES

O, la prière! la prière!

[*A second of silence answers. Doris holds out her arms.*]

DORIS

Viens t'a genouiller ici, mon ange.

[Dolores runs to Doris and kneels prettily; she bows her head and clasps her hands and makes an exquisite and touching figure as she goes through her little French prayer. Everyone about her watches her intently and everyone is fixed in an attitude of absolute silence, with fingers to lips in a warning to each other to be attentive. Papa is positively reverent, and Chloe seems about to yield to her emotion. Doris herself looks sweet and lovely, as she sits with her eyes downcast above the kneeling child, one hand on Dolores' head, the other, with the cigarette between the fingers, held off in the air in an attentive gesture. The atmosphere relaxes when the prayer is finished, and Dolores arises.]

DOLORES

Bonne nuit, Maman!

[Dolores does not think it necessary to address all the others, but runs again to Mademoiselle, who bows slightly and takes the child's hand. Then they are gone.]

PAPA

The little angel!

CHLOE

The darling!

DORIS (*dutifully*)

My adorable baby!

PAPA

It is positively touching to see a pure little child saying its evening prayer.

DICK

How about some bridge before dinner?

PAPA (*delighted*)

I'm just in the mood. (*To Doris and Chloe*) Who will play?

CHLOE (*tranquil again*)

I'll take a hand.

DICK

How about it, Doris?

DORIS

No, thanks.

[*The others all look toward Mr. Roderick.*]

MR. RODERICK

You don't need me, do you? If you don't mind playing with the dummy, I'll stay out.

PAPA

Are we expecting any guests for dinner, dear?

DORIS

No, dear, but we'll motor to the Casino later, perhaps.

[*Chloe and Dick follow Papa into another room.*]

DORIS

More tea, Roddy, dear?

MR. RODERICK (*shakes his head*)

No, my dear.

DORIS (*holding out a cigarette case*)

A cigarette, dear?

MR. RODERICK

No, my dear.

DORIS

Got a headache? (*She ruffles his hair*)

MR. RODERICK

No, my dear.

DORIS

Worried? What about?

MR. RODERICK

Are you happy, Doris?

DORIS

Oh, yes, Roddy: perfectly.

MR. RODERICK

Have I done all that you dreamed and hoped about little Dolores?

DORIS

You have been simply splendid. You have shown the greatest magnanimity. Papa said so himself.

MR. RODERICK

Well, I want to do still more: to bring myself to show a greater magnanimity!

DORIS (*amazed*)

What — what could you possibly do?

MR. RODERICK (*slowly, with emotional emphasis*)

Permit Dolores' father — her *real* father — to see his child!

DORIS (*appalled*)

That — that man!

MR. RODERICK

I have given the subject much thought. I have said to myself that, after all, Zimzapanzi *is* a great tenor: artists have certain prerogatives — great artists, I mean. His mistake about you was unpardonable in every way, but doubtless he did not know who you were. He confused you with a different type of person. We must not forget that he is a foreigner.

DORIS

Yes, I forgave him: Papa forgave him: Chloe forgave him: but we all feel — we all consider him quite, quite impossible, socially.

MR. RODERICK

But surely the situation is more difficult for me than for anyone else —

DORIS (*interrupting*)

But there is n't any situation that I can see.

MR. RODERICK

My darling, be brave! Zimzapanzi is here!

DORIS (*acting her best and pretending amazement*)

Here?

MR. RODERICK

At the inn. Yesterday he picked me up when one of my tires got a puncture and took me on to the Casino in his machine. I did n't know who he was until we had lunched together, though I discovered him at once to be a man of great distinction, my dear, and charm.

DORIS

Oh, Roddy, you don't want to bring him back into my life, do you? (*She seems alarmed*)

MR. RODERICK

He is with some charming people — the Earl of Hemmingway, and the Countess.

DORIS (*interested in this delightful news*)

But Roddy — do you think we could have them here? Zimzapanzi, I mean.

MR. RODERICK

If I can endure it, and you can endure it, we must — for the sake of Little Dolores! It is his right, Doris!

DORIS

Have you — asked — him —?

MR. RODERICK

I went over to-day. I told him all.

DORIS

What did he say?

MR. RODERICK

Very little. . . . He wrung my hand. . . . He understands. . . . He thanked me for — for — everything — particularly for speaking.

DORIS (*rising and becoming animated with the spirit of this adventure*) You are right! We'll introduce them. Oh, Roddy, dear, you are so noble!

MR. RODERICK

My darling! (*He embraces her tenderly*) But whatever your memories — you will — you will not —? He *is* fascinating, my darling!

DORIS

Now, Roddy, don't worry about that. I could not love anybody but you. I am really not at all sentimental about my — past. Only seeing him *will* be difficult.

MR. RODERICK

I understand perfectly. But I shall not leave you to bear the strain alone: the child and I will help you through the first meeting.

[*Leopold appears with a card on a tray, Doris takes it: her eyes and Mr. Roderick's meet and both thrill with the consciousness that this is a dramatic situation.*]

DORIS

It is — he!

MR. RODERICK

Ask the Signor to wait, Leopold. (*The servant bows and goes out; Mr. Roderick turns to Doris*) Now, my darling, be brave! I did not think that he would

come so soon, but doubtless the thought of Little Dolores haunted him. I will go, myself, and bring her to you. Wait here.

[He leads her to a chair and indicates that she is to sit down. He places her, just so, and turns the chair at an effective angle: then, on tiptoe, as if he were at a funeral, he leaves the room. As soon as he is gone, she springs from her chair and to the other doorway. Her voice, as she calls, keeping an eye out for Mr. Roderick's return, is a tense stage-whisper.]

DORIS

Papa! I want you — just a second!

[Doris scampers back to her chair and takes care to arrange herself just as Mr. Roderick left her. Papa enters, his cards in his hand, excitement and alarm in his face.]

PAPA

My angel, what is it?

DORIS *(takes on the air of a guilty conspirator as she leans toward him and speaks in a tense voice)* It's that man, Papa — Zimzapanzi: he's here! I can't explain — but Roddy thought he ought to meet Dolores, and got him over from the hotel. It's a good thing that you told him that Roddy thinks she's my child, so he won't think Chloe is Roddy's wife — and spoil everything. You're sure he got that straight?

PAPA

Yes, my darling. He was very much touched by your nobility in assuming your sister's mistake. He said that such unselfishness was very rare.

[Chloe enters with her cards still in her hand.]

DORIS (*rising excitedly*)

Good heavens! What do you want, Chloe?

CHLOE

I saw him come! Where is he?

DORIS

S'sh: here 's Roddy!

[The three are grouped like conspirators when through the doorway suddenly enter Mr. Roderick and Zimzapanzi, with Little Dolores between them. They enter in absolute and beautiful silence. Little Dolores wears a pink dressing gown to her ankles, and on her feet are pink knitted bedroom slippers with wide pink bows on them. Mr. Roderick, Dolores and Zimzapanzi form a group directly facing Doris, Papa and Chloe. There is an intense long pause. In fact, the pause is too long. Zimzapanzi, who is fat and obviously a child of Italy and a person of temperament, stares from Doris to Chloe hopelessly. His eyes are blank. He feels that something is required of him, but he has a poor memory for faces. Papa feels that someone ought to say something.]

PAPA (*bowing*)

Ah, Signor Zimzapanzi! How delightful to have this pleasure.

[Zimzapanzi bows low in response — but his eyes are blank as he still looks hopelessly out of the corner of his eyes, first at Doris, then at Chloe, then at Mr. Roderick. He is almost praying for someone to help him. Neither Papa nor Mr. Roderick quite know what is the matter. They take his silence for fitting emotion, but begin to feel there has been enough. They expect something different. Suddenly, as the

pause is exquisitely embarrassing and painful, little Dolores runs toward Doris.

DOLORES

Maman! Maman!

[Zimzapanzi recovers his poise at once. Doris seats herself again in the effective attitude in which Mr. Roderick had placed her. She opens her arms to Dolores and lifts her upon her lap.]

DORIS

Viens ici, ma petite.

[Now that Doris and Dolores are adjusted and Zimzapanzi is sure of his ground, he advances toward them with operatic ease.]

PAPA

You'll pardon us? We are at bridge.

[Mr. Roderick nods, Doris nods, Zimzapanzi nods, but no one replies. Chloe gives one stormy look toward Zimzapanzi and rushes out. Papa follows. Mr. Roderick takes a chair at the back of the room. Zimzapanzi feels that his way is clear, and he begins a performance calculated to charm his host as well as his hostess. He drops on one fat knee with astonishing ease. His voice is deep and glorious, his English almost perfect. His exclamation is full of feeling.]

ZIMZAPANZI

Ah! You! *(Taking her hand he kisses it reverently)* And our little one!

[He regards Dolores' little dark face with undeniably genuine interest and affection. Doris finds him a worthy collaborator. She proceeds to act her part with much enjoyment and confidence — keeping an eye on Mr. Roderick for effect.]

DORIS

You — you remember me?

[Her voice is sweet and Zimzapanzi does not fail her. His answer is full of beauty and pathos.]

ZIMZAPANZI

As I remember few things in my life, Madame!

DORIS

Sit there, won't you, near us?

[She indicates a large chair. Zimzapanzi rises from his knees and brings this chair still closer to her own. He seats himself and waits. There is a brief pause.]

DORIS *(referring to the child in her arms)*

This is your — this is our — daughter, Little Dolores. Is n't she sweet? I think she is very much like you. Don't you?

ZIMZAPANZI

Let me look at her.

[Dolores is pushed by Doris into an upright position: she regards the stranger with polite curiosity.]

ZIMZAPANZI

Yes, yes, she is like me. But she is more like my sister Teresa. One would notice the resemblance at once.

DORIS

Have you any other children? *(There is the briefest pause)* Oh, I beg your pardon! Roddy, dear, Dolores is like the Signor, is n't she?

MR. RODERICK

Quite, quite; yes, quite.

[Another slight pause.]

ZIMZAPANZI

Would she — come to me, you think?

DORIS (*with an inspiration*)

You shall be her uncle! Chèrie, do you see the new uncle? Will you not go and speak to him? He is a good uncle and loves you very much. Vas l'embrasser.

DOLORES

Oui, oui, Maman. (*She slides from Doris' arms, courtesies to the guest, and holds up her face to be kissed*) Bon Jour, mon oncle.

[*The emotional Zimzapanzi sweeps the child into his arms, kissing her and murmuring Italian words to her in his splendid voice. Dolores likes him at once.*]

ZIMZAPANZI

Ah — pretty baby — mea cara! Com' è carina!

[*Dolores is impressed and even puts her arms about his neck. Doris is delighted.*]

DORIS

Oh, you are simply splendid! Roddy, is n't he splendid? He does love the child, and she loves him! You were right. Is n't my husband the noblest man in the world, Signor?

ZIMZAPANZI (*a little surprised*)

Yes, Madame, M'sieur is most generous. I — cannot quite understand such magnificence of the heart. This is a profound — a great joy — you may believe — for me!

DORIS

You shall come and see her every day! Can't he, Roddy? You are stopping for some time at the hotel?

ZIMZAPANZI

For a month, Madame; then I must go to London.

DORIS

Roddy says you are with friends?

ZIMZAPANZI

Yes, Madame; I should so like that you might know them.

[Papa enters again. It is plain that he could not keep away.]

DORIS

Papa, dear, you've no idea how perfect it has been to see them together! The Signor adores Dolores! And she adores him!

PAPA (*advancing toward the group and speaking to Dolores*) Who is this, darling?

DOLORES

Mon cher oncle. (*Dolores slips from Zimzapanzi's arms at this, kisses Papa, and then curls herself up in a chair; she soon goes to sleep*)

DORIS

I thought she'd better call him "uncle"; it is much simpler.

MR. RODERICK

Quite right.

[Mr. Roderick has left his seat, and he and Papa are now standing near Doris.]

PAPA

Quite tactful of you, my darling.

DORIS

Signor Zimzapanzi is coming every day to see her, until he goes to London, and he has some friends he wants us to meet.

ZIMZAPANZI

The Earl and the Countess of Hemmingway: they are what you call in America "good sports."

PAPA

That will be delightful.

ZIMZAPANZI (*rising and turning to Mr. Roderick*)

I do not know quite how — to — say my thanks: especially to you, M'sieur. (*He bows to Mr. Roderick*)

MR. RODERICK (*beaming with his nobility*)

Say nothing, I beg of you: I have done only what — what was right, what was just. Your attitude has firmly convinced me that I have made no mistake. Perhaps you will dine with us?

ZIMZAPANZI

I have engaged my friends to dine with me. It is unfortunate. Perhaps we might meet later?

PAPA

That would be delightful.

ZIMZAPANZI

And still later, supper. I will sing!

DORIS

How perfect!

ZIMZAPANZI (*to Doris*)

You have friends with you?

DORIS

There will be five of us.

ZIMZAPANZI (*to Papa and Mr. Roderick*)

It is arranged. And now, au revoir. We shall meet to-night. (*He bows over Doris' hand with profound reverence*) Au revoir, Madame.

[*Doris rings the bell as Zimzapanzi moves away and stops by the chair in which Dolores has gone to sleep. He stoops and kisses her, speaking in a low voice without awaking her.*]

ZIMZAPANZI

Buona notte, mea cara! (*Now he turns to Mr. Roderick*) Again, M'sieur, I thank you.

[*Leopold has appeared and Zimzapanzi makes a good exit. There is a slight pause, then Papa speaks blithely.*]

PAPA

Perfectly charming, is n't he?

MR. RODERICK

Great distinction and understanding.

[*Dick and Chloe enter; he is peevish.*]

DICK

When you play *bridge*, you've got to play *bridge*.

CHLOE

I know, Dick, but I had the fidgets.

PAPA

You must pardon *me*, my dear boy. Bridge should not be attempted at such a time. It is a thing not to be taken lightly and given only one's odd moments.

DORIS

Well, it's time to dress for dinner now, anyway. Signor Zimzapanzi has asked us to supper, Chloe. The Hemmingways are to be there, so look spiffy.

DICK

Earl of Hemmingway? I'd like to know why people like that take up with opera-singers and artists and people like that?

DORIS

What would you wear, Chloe: that yellow thing, or the little mauve from Lucille. It always makes a hit. . . . The Witchmeres are sure to see us.

CHLOE

The mauve, I think. . . . I'd better put on my green

one, with the silver do-jiggers. . . . No, I shall wear that simple white chiffon, with the pink rosebuds.

PAPA

You look exactly like a débutante in it, my dear. Do you remember one, almost like it, that you had in your first season?

CHLOE (*impassively, and with a far-off look*)

I was just thinking of it.

DORIS

Where are we to meet them, Roddy?

MR. RODERICK

I don't think he said, my dear. I'll see if I can catch him, and ask him. (*He goes out through the terrace, in a hurry*)

PAPA (*generously, as he goes out through curtained doorway*) Now, my darling daughters, be very nice, for my sake, to the Witchmeres.

DORIS

Yes, Papa. Come on, Chloe.

CHLOE

In a moment.

[*Doris follows Papa out.*]

DICK

Come on, Chloe.

CHLOE

In a moment, Dick. Don't wait.

[*Dick follows Doris out. Chloe, left alone, stands beside Dolores' chair and looks down at the sleeping child. Her attitude is tender and romantic. Zimzapanzi reënters.*]

ZIMZAPANZI (*coming through the curtained doorway and stopping hesitantly as he speaks*) Pardon me — we

were not introduced, I believe. (*Chloe turns to him; he is explanatory and untroubled*) But I returned to say that I shall await my guests at the hotel. We shall go to the Casino together. You will tell the others?

CHLOE

Yes.

ZIMZAPANZI

Your face is a little familiar, Madame. I trust that you are coming, too. (*There is a little pause; he speaks with charm*) Have we ever met before?

CHLOE

It was a long time ago. (*Her tone is cold and half-tragic; involuntarily she glances at Dolores*)

ZIMZAPANZI

You are—? Forgive me! I—I remember now. I did not understand from your father that you, too, were here. Yes, yes, I remember! (*His tone is uncertain, but contrite*)

CHLOE

No, you don't.

ZIMZAPANZI

But I—I am almost remembering. Forgive me! I—I— one has so much to remember in my profession, Madame. You *do* forgive me?

CHLOE

I forgave you — *everything*, even this — the first time that I heard you sing — afterwards.

ZIMZAPANZI (*eagerly*)

What was my rôle?

CHLOE

I — I — I — don't remember exactly, now.

ZIMZAPANZI (*wounded and angry and childish*)

Indeed! How is that possible, if it meant so much to you?

CHLOE (*formal again, ignoring his question*)

And now, au revoir. You can go this way. Mr. Roderick is looking for you, but I will give him the message if you miss him. (*She points the way through the French windows across the terrace*) Follow that walk. Your motor is around that curve.

ZIMZAPANZI

Au revoir. . . . I — I am not a bad fellow, Madame. [*He lifts her hand to his lips, kisses it apologetically, bows and goes out. She watches him a second, shrugs her shoulders and goes out through the curtained doorway. A brief pause. Leopold appears, straightens a chair or two, sees Dolores and removes her — as the curtain falls.*]

CURTAIN

THE THIRD ACT
PAPA'S FUTURE

PERSONS

DORIS

CHLOE

PAPA

MR. RODERICK

DICK

MRS. BLYTHE

A MAID

THE THIRD ACT

Seven or eight months have passed, and the Spring is approaching in London. Doris and Chloe, in a sitting-room of their complicated suite at the Ritz-Carlton, are trying to think of something that they might do at this early hour of half-past eleven in the morning. They are distinctly bored. Chloe puts aside her magazine and turns to Doris, who is playing solitaire at a table.

CHLOE

How stupid everything is!

DORIS

London is a wretched place to shop, too. (*She plays her last card and sweeps them all back into the deck; this she puts in its place in a rack on the table*)

CHLOE

I don't even feel like buying anything.

DORIS

What is the matter with everybody?

CHLOE

You'd better ask what is the matter with Papa. Anyone with half an eye can see that something's wrong.

DORIS

It's the weather. I'll get Roddy to take us to the Riviera. Papa needs a change.

CHLOE

He has had a beautiful time here.

DORIS

Everyone is simply mad about him.

CHLOE

He goes everywhere and knows everybody.

DORIS

The Princess adored him. She told him all her children's ages, and all the funny things that they had said since they could talk.

CHLOE

And the prince said he'd never tasted anything like the cocktails that Papa is onto.

DORIS

Even Mrs. Blythe said that she could n't see why he was n't an Ambassador.

CHLOE

And the other night at the opera Constantina Tretore kept half of the Peerage waiting while Papa was congratulating her after the second act. She says he is the keenest critic she has.

DORIS

You know it was quite fortunate, in a way, that Roddy raked up Zimzapanzi, was n't it?

CHLOE

You know perfectly well how I feel about that, Doris. Why mention it?

DORIS

Well, it was n't Roddy's fault that Zimzapanzi did n't remember you, Chloe. But you're never grateful for anything.

CHLOE

Why *should* I be grateful for having my past recalled?

DORIS

You're always recalling it yourself. You've filled three diaries on the strength of that one affair, you know.

CHLOE

Be that as it may, Doris — think of what I had to suffer in humiliation, at being forgotten.

DORIS

Think of what we all would have suffered if Zimzapanzi had made a mistake and picked out the wrong one — right before Roddy! You ought to be grateful to your dying day that he had the sense to wait and find out which one of us was his child's mother before he said anything. You've got to admit that he's been a perfect dear about introducing us to people — and about Dolores. He's simply devoted to her.

CHLOE

But I shall never consent to Dolores' spending the summer with him. I have no idea what sort of person his wife is — or what sort of children she might be allowed to know.

DORIS

Oh, they've been divorced for ages: did n't you know that? Mademoiselle would go with Dolores, and if Roddy says "yes," you'll have to be a sport and stand for it.

CHLOE

It is simply infamous — not having a word to say about what happens to one's own child.

DORIS

But she's Zimzapanzi's, too. You can't get around that. You'll have to act just as you would if you'd

been married and divorced — no matter how much you may hate him.

[Enter Papa — looking excessively English, and speaking more so.]

PAPA

Good morning, daughters!

[They run to him, pleased at this diversion, with kisses and greetings.]

DORIS AND CHLOE (*together*)

Good morning, Papa, darling! (*They cling to his arms prettily*)

DORIS

How are you this morning, dear?

CHLOE

Did you sleep well, dear?

DORIS

Have you had your breakfast, dear?

CHLOE

Are you going out, dear?

DORIS

You're looking well, dear. Do you feel better?

PAPA

My darling daughters, I've come to confess something. Let us be seated.

[They sit in an affectionate group.]

DORIS

Now, tell us.

CHLOE

It can't be anything really naughty.

DORIS

What is it all about, dear?

PAPA

You won't be vexed with me?

DORIS

Of course not, darling.

CHLOE

How simply beautifully that coat fits!

DORIS (*reproving Chloe with a look*)

Papa is in trouble, Chloe! (*To Papa*) Now tell us, dear.

PAPA

It's about my future; I — I want to settle down —

DORIS AND CHLOE (*together, with amazement*)

Settle down!

PAPA

And get to work —

DORIS AND CHLOE (*together, with horror*)

Work!

PAPA

And amount to something —

DORIS AND CHLOE (*together with utter stupefaction*)

Amount to something!

PAPA

Do something! Be of use!

DORIS AND CHLOE (*together, feebly*)

Of use!

PAPA

To myself! To my country!

CHLOE (*with relief*)

To your country! Oh! Is that all?

DORIS (*getting his idea*)

You want to be an Ambassador! Mrs. Blythe has been putting it into your head!

CHLOE

Which country will you take, dear?

PAPA

There, there, my darlings; you have the idea but not all — all the details.

DORIS

What else?

CHLOE

Go on, dear.

PAPA

I want — I think I ought — I — how can I express it?

DORIS AND CHLOE (*together, hopefully*)

Money?

PAPA

No, my angels — it's — it's — getting married!

DORIS AND CHLOE (*together in absolute astonishment*)

Getting married! Oh! Oh! Oh!

CHLOE

Why, Papa! (*She begins to sob and falls into his arms*)

DORIS

Why — why — Papa. (*She is angry enough to find that she has to fight back the tears; she too is in Papa's arms and he comforts both*)

PAPA

There — there! My treasures! Forgive me! Don't cry! (*He begins to cry himself*) I — I love you more than life itself, my angels!

DORIS

How — how can you think of such a thing, Papa?

CHLOE

Are n't we good enough for you?

DORIS

What vile woman has been trying to entangle you, dear?

CHLOE

You're too good, Papa. You've let some designing creature work on your sympathies! You ought to be more careful.

DORIS

You have n't gone and asked anybody, yet — have you?

PAPA

Now — now — now — now! (*He tries to be soothing, but both fly up at him*)

CHLOE AND DORIS (*together, accusingly*)

Have you, Papa?

[*There is a pause. Papa pulls himself together.*]

PAPA

Forgive me, but — I thought you'd approve!

DORIS

Who is she?

CHLOE

Yes, who is she?

PAPA

Mrs. Blythe.

CHLOE AND DORIS (*together, in quite a different tone*)

Oh!

PAPA

You *do* approve, don't you, my angels?

CHLOE AND DORIS (*delighted*)

Of course, Papa.

PAPA

Only — she — she has n't accepted me yet.

DORIS

What 's wrong?

CHLOE

Has she given you hope?

PAPA

She — she 's practically said “ yes ” — but —

CHLOE

All sorts of kings have been wild about her.

DORIS

For heaven's sake, Chloe, that is n't the point, now. Go on, Papa; why did she say she hesitated?

PAPA

She thinks I ought to do something — write a great book — or be an Ambassador — or buy a newspaper — or a string of horses — something.

DORIS

Well, you 've got to do it then. We 'll get Roddy on the job. Wait a minute. (*She goes into the next room*)

CHLOE

Why on earth would *she* marry anybody!

PAPA (*proudly*)

I have reason to think that she cherishes an affection for me.

CHLOE

Of course! That must be it! She 's in love!

DORIS (*returns*)

I 've sent Louise for Roddy. We 'll have a consultation. Where 's Dick?

CHLOE

I 'll have Marguerite find him. (*She goes out through the door opposite the one Doris used*)

DORIS (*to Papa*)

Now, dear, which thing do you like best — horses or newspapers or books or diplomacy?

PAPA

That is what I've been asking myself.

[*Mr. Roderick enters through the door that Doris used. At the same instant Chloe brings Dick from the opposite room.*]

CHLOE

Here he is!

[*There are greetings between them all, and a slight tendency to talk at once. Presently they are all seated about the room in attentive fashion, and Doris has the floor.*]

DORIS

Roddy — you and Dick must do some very intelligent thinking. This is a matter of importance. We've got to decide on Papa's future. He's going in for a career.

MR. RODERICK

A career for Papa? Quite so!

DICK

What for?

MR. RODERICK

Are you strong enough for that sort of thing?

DORIS

Oh, *are* you strong enough, Papa?

CHLOE

Yes, are you, Papa?

PAPA

It would n't be arduous, would it? We must select nothing too arduous.

DICK

Any sort of career is arduous, and a bore, and a lot of work. What 's the idea, anyway?

CHLOE

It will surprise you very much, but —

DORIS

But Papa is going to get married!

MR. RODERICK

Papa get married?

DICK

Who 's the girl?

MR. RODERICK

Married? Is it advisable?

DORIS

Do hush, Roddy: it 's — Mrs. Blythe!

[Dick gives a long whistle, eloquent of the fact that he is impressed. So is Mr. Roderick.]

MR. RODERICK

Mrs. Blythe!

DORIS

And she wants him to do something!

MR. RODERICK

Quite so! Of course! Anything in mind? *(He is reverential in putting the question to Papa)*

PAPA

It lies between three or four suggestions of the lady herself — racing, buying a newspaper, writing a book, or diplomacy.

CHLOE

Papa *ought* to write a book.

DICK

That 's easy. Go in for a stable.

MR. RODERICK

They say Wilkins wants to sell his Paris and London papers. They've put him into things over here.

DORIS

It is as plain as the nose on a man's face that Papa ought to be an Ambassador. Who's president now? You fix it up with him, don't you — or with a Secretary or assistant or something?

CHLOE

What I want to know is — which country? She knows everybody, every place, of course!

[A knock is heard on the door.]

DORIS

Come in.

THE MAID (*enters from the private hall*)

Mrs. Blythe is downstairs and wishes to know if Mrs. Roderick is at home.

[There is an intense pause.]

DORIS

Tell them to bring her up, at once, Louise.

THE MAID

Yes, Madame.

[The Maid goes out. The pause continues.]

DORIS

I wonder — what —? Fancy her coming!

PAPA

I will go to my rooms while you receive her.

DORIS

I'll come for you myself, dear, if she asks for you. If not, come back accidentally.

PAPA

Thank you, my dear. I understand perfectly.

DICK

I say — why is *she* willing to marry anyone?

DORIS

Oh, yes, papa, — why *is* she willing to get married?
I forgot to ask.

CHLOE

She 's in love with papa!

MR. RODERICK

Quite so. . . . Oh, how very flattering!

PAPA

Let us hope that my darling Chloe does not exaggerate. You will excuse me?

[With the modest grace of a hero he goes out of the door at the back. Another impressive pause follows.]

DORIS

Do I look all right, Chloe?

CHLOE

Put that hairpin that is coming out, in. Yes — you're very attractive. Am I?

DORIS

Yes, exceedingly. (*Pause*) How ugly hotel rooms are! None of one's own pictures — or —

[There is a ring at a doorbell. A hush falls on everybody as Doris and Chloe move toward the door and Mr. Roderick and Dick rise and stand waiting. Louise opens the door from the little private hall, and Mrs. Blythe steps into the room. She is a spectacular person, though gotten up with the most elegant and daring ease. Her clothes, draped about her, caught here and there in unexpected places, are marvellous and picturesque. Her hat proclaims simplicity, but its plumage from Birds of Paradise looks priceless. On her breast is a simple aerial cluster of

mauve orchids. She is slightly lame, but instead of ignoring the fact she makes it the occasion for carrying a tall Shepherd's Crook of black enamel, chastely decorated with a monogram of diamonds, and with casual designs of diamonds set on its handle. She is rather tall, very erect, and her face, only incidentally, is beautiful. To-day she is intimate and charming, in a mood to let everyone flatter and pet and love her. Nevertheless she is a very grand person as she makes her entrance.

DORIS AND CHLOE (*together, with eager and pretty courtesy*) Mrs. Blythe! How good of you! How kind!

[When Mrs. Blythe is well into the room she looks from one to another with wide eyes and a very bright steadfast smile.

MRS. BLYTHE

Are you utterly amazed at my pastoral hour? It is n't twelve o'clock yet. I scarcely hoped to find anyone at home. It is my good luck. Freddy brings me good luck. Freddy is my little Hindoo idol. I burn incense to Freddy every night. I've had him ever since I was sixteen, and I've never had bad luck except when I forgot his incense. You don't think I'm silly, do you?

CHLOE

Of course, we don't.

DORIS

Do you really believe in him, Mrs. Blythe?

MRS. BLYTHE

Well — I don't pray to Freddy; but I'd never risk offending him, you know. He always gets his incense if I think of it — and if my maid forgets it, and

anything happens, I always make it a point to dismiss her. As I was saying, Freddy brings me good luck: I know he does, even though he has shocked several bishops. Has your father gone out?

DORIS

I think not; may I tell him that you are here, Mrs. Blythe?

CHLOE

He will feel so slighted if we don't.

MRS. BLYTHE

You are very fond of your father, are n't you?

CHLOE AND DORIS (*together*)

Oh, yes, Mrs. Blythe!

MRS. BLYTHE

Yes, tell him.

DORIS

Thank you, Mrs. Blythe. (*She goes quickly into the next room*)

CHLOE

We saw you at the opera last night. Papa said that he would take you our love.

MRS. BLYTHE

Yes.

DICK

I thought it was rather good — the opera, you know — for an opera.

MRS. BLYTHE (*languidly*)

I never care much for Tretore — but Zimzapanzi sang beautifully. And of course Schoen conducted with his most magnificent arm movements.

DICK

Yes, I got that!

MRS. BLYTHE

I've often longed to conduct an orchestra myself. Really, now that I think of it, I believe that I shall! Let me put it down for my secretary to make a note of — (*She writes on a tiny engagement pad that is attached to her gold bag*) I might as well as not, at something for charity, you know.

CHLOE

How clever you are, dear Mrs. Blythe!

[*Doris comes back into the room.*]

MRS. BLYTHE

Well, I am clever — and I am not. I don't know anything at all about music, but I do know that I have good arms and a back.

PAPA (*enters*)

My dear Mrs. Blythe!

[*Mrs. Blythe's manner suddenly turns into something a little shy and youthful, but very well done. She is changing her rôles: evidently she likes the new one. She gives her hand to Papa, who kisses it. Papa has changed his tie and put on white spats. She looks at him approvingly.*]

MRS. BLYTHE

I am in a mood this morning, my friend.

PAPA

How delightful, since it brought you to us!

MRS. BLYTHE

But my moods are like good winds that always blow somebody ill. I don't mean to be disastrous — but I am.

PAPA

We will willingly be your victims, dear lady.

MRS. BLYTHE

Don't promise too soon: now what do you think this mood made me do?

DORIS AND CHLOE (*together*)

Oh, do tell us!

MRS. BLYTHE

I awoke hating everything. Then I thought: "I particularly hate that stupid Princess with whom I am to have luncheon! I won't go to her!" Was n't that bad of me!

CHLOE

Good gracious! But what could you do about it?

PAPA

Charming! Perfectly charming!

MRS. BLYTHE

You have n't heard the worst. I got the Prince on the telephone. I said to him: "I can't come to luncheon to-day with Her Highness. I don't want to. What shall I do about it?"

DORIS

What did he say? Was he angry?

MRS. BLYTHE

Angry? Oh, dear no: he knows what a bore she is, and he's charming: he asked me if I preferred him, but when I said "no, not to-day," he said for me to go on and do what I liked, and he'd have her send me a note not to come. You see? Well, then I thought that I'd like to surprise someone. So here I am! You see?

DORIS

How perfectly original you are!

MR. RODERICK

I say, quite so!

CHLOE

No wonder people say you 're unusual!

DICK

It 's awfully clever of you, really, to turn 'em down when you feel like it.

PAPA (*indulgently, with unconcealed affection*)

What a child! What a delightful, dear, spoiled child!

[*These words go straight to Mrs. Blythe's heart.*

She becomes sweet and young as a breath of violets.

MRS. BLYTHE

And now you must come and play with me. I feel just like playing.

DORIS

But dear Mrs. Blythe, suppose Her Highness found out?

CHLOE

Yes, suppose she did?

DICK

By jove!

[*Everyone is anxious.*

MRS. BLYTHE (*superbly*)

She won't! And even if she did, I should not care. It is no distinction for me to be *her* friend. She is so indiscriminately exclusive.

DORIS

Indiscriminately exclusive! You mean —

PAPA

Oh yes!

[*Everyone realizes by Mrs. Blythe's manner that she has been clever. They applaud her with smiles and flattering attitudes. She is ready now for something else. She turns to Papa.*

MRS. BLYTHE

Now what are you going to do with me?

PAPA (*charmingly, with meaning*)

Keep you — just as long as we can!

MRS. BLYTHE (*evading but recognizing his intention*)

You 're lunching with somebody? I will go with you.
Where?

DORIS

Madame Tretore's. Of course, she'd love having you.

MRS. BLYTHE

No — she would n't. But I'll go just the same. We're perfectly good-natured enemies. We love putting each other out. But I was rather hoping that we might go to the country. I'd love to be quaint to-day and stop somewhere and drink milk.

PAPA

Could n't I persuade you —?

MRS. BLYTHE

Alone —! My dear man.

PAPA

But dear lady!

MRS. BLYTHE

Oh! I remember now why I came! There was a reason, too! Read that! (*She finds a letter in her bag and gives it to Papa*) I don't believe it, of course — but this sort of thing is inconvenient.

[*Papa reads the letter and fidgets. There is an intense pause. He catches Doris' eye. She realizes something is wrong.*]

DORIS

May I — too?

MRS. BLYTHE

Oh yes, all of you. It is nothing of any consequence; of any deep consequence . . . just unpleasant.

PAPA (*engineering something, as he hands the letter to Doris*) Dick, my boy — I forgot. Will you do something for me?

[*Papa goes over to Dick, who rises, and speaks in a low voice. Dick is obliging.*]

DICK

Of course, right away. (*He turns to the others*)
You'll excuse me? I won't be long.

PAPA (*explaining*)

It is a very necessary errand.

[*The others simply look up and accept the incident as Dick goes out. The door closes. Doris has given the note to Chloe. An intense pause still reigns.*]

MRS. BLYTHE (*suddenly*)

Perhaps I should not have concerned myself with a family matter — but — (*She grows shy*)

CHLOE (*reading*)

Good heavens!

DORIS

Read it, Roddy!

PAPA (*to Mrs. Blythe as Mr. Roderick reads the note*)

It was splendid of you, splendid!

MRS. BLYTHE

But as I was saying, my dear friend, only last night I definitely decided to marry you —

PAPA (*ecstatically, taking her hand*)

Not — not really and truly!

MRS. BLYTHE

Yes — really and truly. I decided we could settle

on a career for you afterwards. In fact, I'm not sure that I want you to have one now!

PAPA

This is too good. I can't believe it!

MRS. BLYTHE

I thought you'd be glad, and I meant to telephone quite early — then this note came. Of course, it is sheer blackmail — or from somebody who is jealous of you.

PAPA (*drooping a little*)

Yes, yes — a rival, no doubt. The cad!

[There is a slight pause. Everyone is silent, thinking and perplexed.]

MRS. BLYTHE

It's nonsense, really, but I thought I ought to know the straight of things. I'm a woman of the world, dear friend. I'm not provincial. I left America at the time of my first marriage. Certainly no one has ever called me narrow-minded. I was one of the first women of my acquaintance to go in for Socialism. I have no intention now of being curious or of blaming you for some past romance which, everyone in London whispers, must have been very romantic and beautiful. Your attitude has been all that anyone could desire — but I think that the situation ought to be explained to me if I am to become your wife. I love children. I have often been god-mother. I might become attached to this one. But I think I ought to know if the mother is living or dead — or whether or not she would be likely to take the child away just as I got fond of her. You see? Then, again, how could I feel as fond of her as I should unless I knew what her antecedents were? You see?

DORIS

But it is n't Papa who adopted her, Mrs. Blythe. Roddy and I did it. We mean to keep her always. We consider her *our* child.

CHLOE

Mrs. Blythe — you must n't think it is Papa. I — I — I must tell the truth at last! Dolores is my child.

[There is consternation and surprise. Doris and Papa, this time, are utterly floored; but Mr. Roderick advances with his tale.

MR. RODERICK

Do not heed her, Mrs. Blythe. No doubt Chloe means well, but she misunderstands your attitude on this subject, and is needlessly excited. I see that you are concerned, not with her father's past, but with the child herself — with her birth as it affects her position in this family. Quite right. But let me assure you that this note is a lie. The child belongs to Doris — my wife!

MRS. BLYTHE (*bewildered*)

Really?

MR. RODERICK

It is entirely true. Before my wife would marry me, she told me of this one lamentable incident for which no one could possibly blame her — least of all I.

DORIS

Roddy was simply wonderful, Mrs. Blythe. He is so magnanimous. He adopted Dolores as soon as we 'd been married a proper length of time.

MR. RODERICK

Doris' father, with the greatest discretion and sympathy, had watched over and cared for the welfare

of her child until that time. Now little Dolores is ours. She will never embarrass you.

MRS. BLYTHE

Oh, oh! I see. But — but, on the whole, I think it is in better taste to let the rumors remain undisturbed. A young girl, you know — really! One can never quite reconcile such things. It looks as though she had not been well brought up.

MR. RODERICK

Quite so, and for that reason precisely I am prepared to assume, by inference, the child's parentage. Even my brother-in-law suspects me of some past entanglement.

DORIS

But Roddy — I don't want people to think that you ever cared enough for someone else to adopt her child.

MRS. BLYTHE

It is often done, my dear, especially in the households of the great continental families. (*Her tone is a reproof*)

PAPA

And now, dear lady, that this matter has been set straight —?

MRS. BLYTHE

Now, really, I must go. I have decided that I don't want to see Tretore to-day. Tretore always talks about Tretore — and that bores me. I forgot.

PAPA

But suppose that we go to the country instead — and drink milk.

MRS. BLYTHE (*relenting a little*)

Could you?

DORIS

Oh yes! We can send Madam Tretore a note.
Roddy writes beautiful ones.

PAPA (*to Mrs. Blythe*)

Could n't you?

MRS. BLYTHE

I might — if you really want to play with me instead
of Tretore.

PAPA

Of course.

MRS. BLYTHE (*to the others*)

Then run and get ready, and in five minutes I'll know
whether I feel like it or not.

DORIS

Come, Roddy. You'd better have Dick paged,
Chloe.

CHLOE

I will.

[*Doris and Mr. Roderick go out through one door,
Chloe through another. Mrs. Blythe is not quite her-
self. She seems a little put out with Papa. He feels
this; his tact is infinite, his charm exquisite.*]

PAPA (*taking her hand*)

A little cloud has floated across the clear blue sky
of your soul, my dear.

[*Mrs. Blythe cannot quite resist this, but she is still
put out and sulks a little. She evades him.*]

MRS. BLYTHE

I think you'd better have a career. After all, a man
ought to have a career or a romance — something
to distinguish him; in other words, a future or a
past.

PAPA

You have only to suggest what you want me to do.

MRS..BLYTHE

Who *is* the child's other parent, anyway?

PAPA

A very famous person, my dear: a great opera singer: but — really, I ought not to say more — perhaps you can surmise without my speaking.

MRS. BLYTHE

Why — it really is romantic, is n't it? Quite a fascinating mystery, in fact!

[She seems pleased and muses. Doris and Mr. Roderick enter. Doris has on her motor things. Mr. Roderick has a note in his hand.]

DORIS

Read it, Roddy. How 's this, Papa?

MR. RODERICK

“Dear Madame Tretore: We are great blunderers. That we were going to the country to-day certainly escaped us when we made our engagement for luncheon with you. We are sorry — and we hope you will be — but we are afraid that you will draw a breath of relief. With deep regrets from all,” etc.

MRS. BLYTHE

She will know that something's up — it's so civil. *[Chloe and Dick enter from the other room. Chloe has her motor things on. Dick holds a note.]*

DICK (*to Papa*)

Here's a telegram. I found it in the box downstairs. I landed on the clerk for not sending it up.

CHLOE AND DORIS (*together*)

Oh, read it, Papa! What is it, Papa?

PAPA (*opens the letter, glances through it and reads aloud*) It's from Madame Tretore. "Don't come! I'm going some place with Zimzapanzi to get married. Read the details in the papers, as I really don't know exactly where, when, or how. Fearfully rushed. Zimzapanzi says that we must have little Dolores for our vacation. Of course, I insist also. Love to the little dear. Affectionately, Tina."

CHLOE

Oh!

DORIS

How exciting!

MR. RODERICK

How satisfactory!

DICK

Why is everyone so keen on the kiddie?

MRS. BLYTHE

Now are we all ready?

PAPA

In just an instant, if you'll pardon me. (*He goes out*)

MR. RODERICK

Just a second. (*He too goes out*)

DICK

In a minute. (*He too goes out*)

MRS. BLYTHE (*turns to Doris and Chloe*)

Come here, my dears.

[*They go to her. She takes a hand of each.*]

MRS. BLYTHE

You love your father very much, don't you?

CHLOE

Of course, Mrs. Blythe.

DORIS

He 's the noblest man in the world, Mrs. Blythe.

MRS. BLYTHE

You 'd do anything for him?

DORIS AND CHLOE (*together*)

Oh, of course, Mrs. Blythe.

MRS. BLYTHE

Will you love me too?

DORIS

You 're perfectly wonderful, dear Mrs. Blythe!

CHLOE

You 're the only woman in the world we 'd let Papa marry, Mrs. Blythe!

MR. RODERICK (*enters with his coat on, his stick, gloves and hat in his hand*) I am ready.

DICK (*enters with his coat on from another direction, carrying hat, gloves and stick*) Ready.

PAPA (*enters from the rear; he also wears his coat and carries his gloves, hat and stick*) Now!

MRS. BLYTHE (*to the others*)

We will follow you. My motor is waiting. You can find it for us.

[*Doris, Chloe, Dick and Mr. Roderick assent in chorus and are gone. Papa goes toward Mrs. Blythe.*]

PAPA

Now, dear lady?

MRS. BLYTHE

I just wanted to tell you, my dear, that I understand. Your daughters have shown great devotion — especially Doris. Her husband evidently believes her story. I consider the matter beautifully settled, and am quite content to let things stand as they are.

You have conducted yourself with great gallantry, but I perceive the truth, although I understand that you may wish to protest in order to protect her. I can be as generous as Zimzapanzi. I cannot blame you. Tretore is very beautiful and very good. She has been singularly eccentric about her reputation. Kings have failed where you succeeded. I wonder if the child will have a voice. I prefer my engagement ring to be set with a single ruby. I love rubies: I always have.

[Papa perceives that she has thrust him into an uncomfortably false position, but, since that is where she wishes him to sit, he resolves heroically to do so for her sake. He kisses her hand and looks into her eyes with the humility of a repentant sinner entering heaven.]

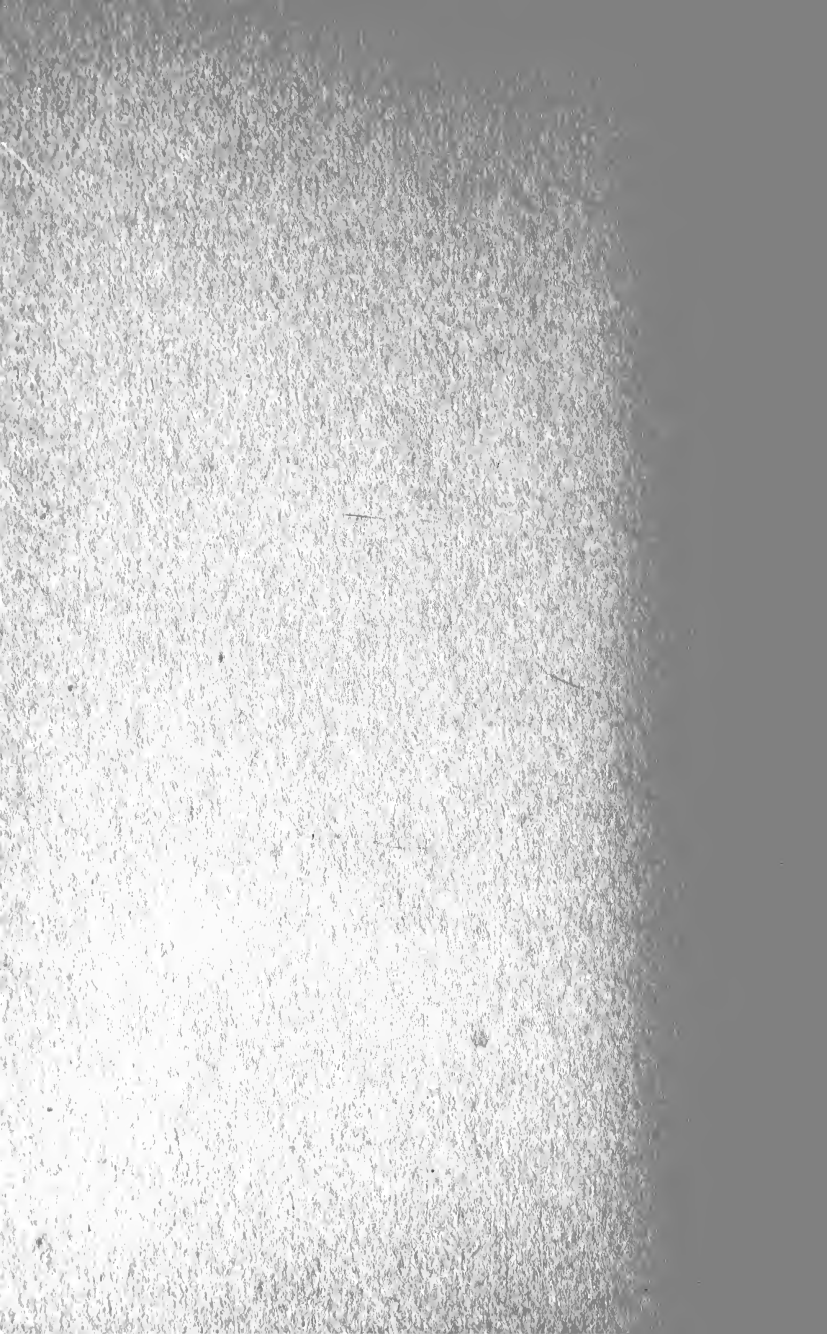
PAPA

My darling! I am a man! There has been much in my life which I ask you to forgive. I—I am not worthy of you. Yes, Little Dolores sings very nicely, already. I shall trust my son-in-law to find me the handsomest ruby in Europe for the most beautiful hand in Europe. Mr. Roderick is quite an expert. You have made me very proud. Shall we go?

[Mrs. Blythe takes his arm affectionately and trustfully, as the curtain falls.]

CURTAIN

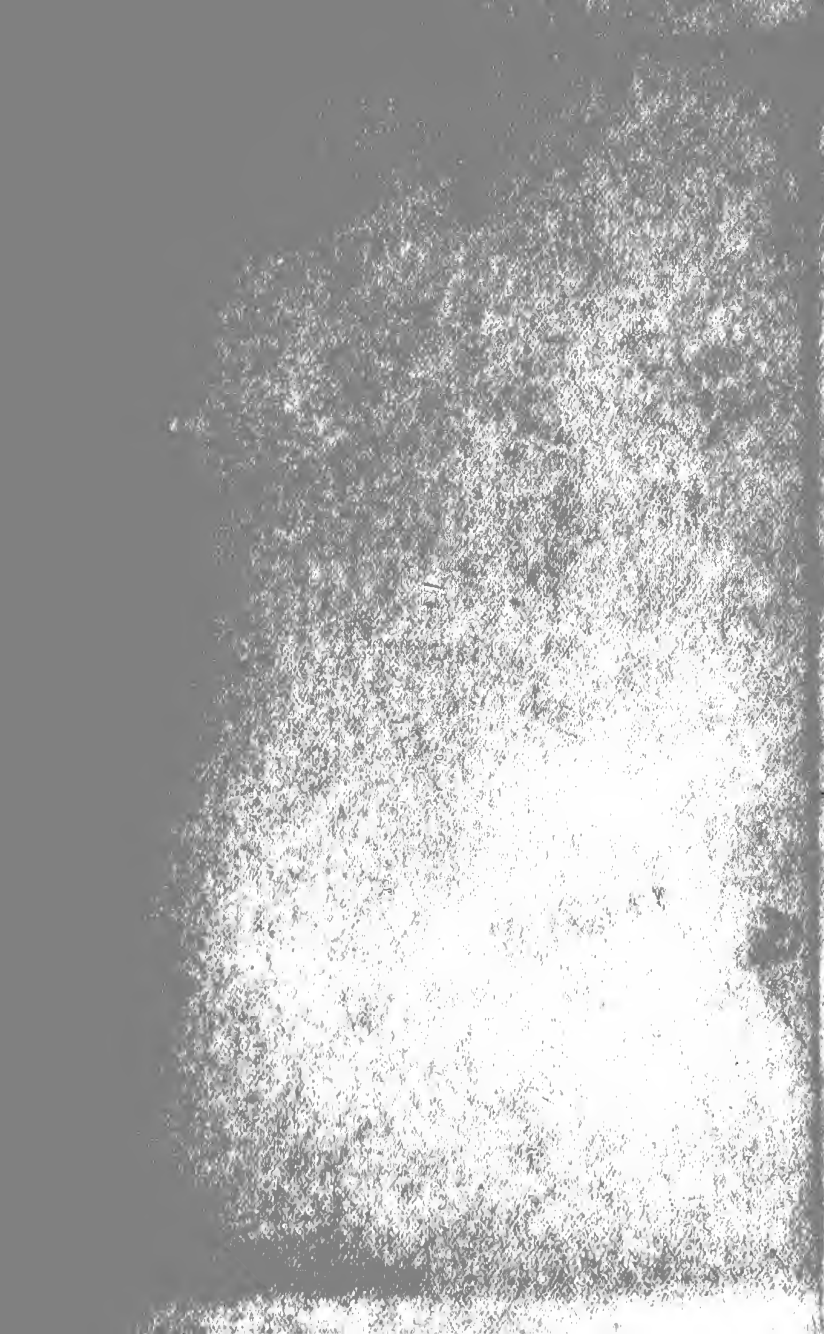
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